3 Quoted from the astounding chapter on Hegel in Russell's *History of Western Philosophy* (1946)
4 *Notebooks 1914 - 1916* (published 1969), p 62
5 *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, volume I (1980), No 630
6 Page 61, *Must we mean what we say* (1969)
7 *Philosophical Papers* (1959), p 258
8 See his immensely valuable *Companion* to Wittgenstein's *Investigations* (1977)
9 See *Wittgenstein's Lectures, Cambridge 1932-1935*, edited by Alice Ambrose (1979)
10 See *Wittgenstein's Lectures, Cambridge 1930-1932*, edited by Desmond Lee (1980), p 26. "Philosophy *is* the synopsis of trivialities": "synopsis", at this stage at least, is obviously Wittgenstein's own attempt to translate the German idea which has become misleadingly canonized as "perspicuity" (*Investigations*, No 122).
11 See *Culture and Value*, edited by G H von Wright (1980 edition), p 44, a remark noted in 1944.
12 Page 96
13 *Culture and Value*, p 17 (dated 1931)
14 Ibid, same year, pp 18 and 16 respectively.

Reviews

BIBLICAL SEMANTIC LOGIC by Arthur Gibson. *Basil Blackwell,* Oxford. £12.00

The dust-jacket of this book has it that "in this innovatory and controversial book Arthur Gibson brings to Biblical language insights derived from the theory of meaning expounded by logicians such as Frege, Dummett and Geach", though the author himself (p 8) tells us that "Wittgenstein's viewpoints and interests much more reflect my own in the present piece of work". An approximate count of the number of references to these writers in the book are: Frege 39; Wittgenstein 56; Dummett 67; Geach 121.

The general conclusions are:

1) "an analytical empiricism is important for producing an arena within which semantic conceptual questions can be formed so as to construct a route to a theory of meaning".

2) This "forces the need for a reassessment of the theological conclusions which have been based on views that have not taken such analytical empiricism seriously".

3) "Since major theological developments have been enjoyed with this inconsistent situation as warrant for them, reassessment in the perspective of the foregoing study needs to extend to some of the most basic assumptions in theology" (p 224).

Mr Gibson ends with the question: "Will this be the foundation for programmes of future research?"

There is no consideration of what Wittgenstein wrote in *On Certainty*, and it is doubtful whether Mr Gibson properly appreciated what Wittgenstein said about logic there (p 501): "Am I not getting closer to saying that in the end logic cannot be described? You must look at the practice of language then you will see it". This does not seem to suggest that anything like a *theory* of meaning is possible, but it also raises questions about what is meant by "the practice of language". In 1944 Wittgenstein wrote to G. E. Moore about the absurdity of the assertion: "There is a

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fire in this room and I don't believe it". (Letters to Russell, Keynes and Moore p 177), and said that the absurdity in this case "is in fact something *similar* to contradiction". Later (*Philosophical Investigations* p 190) Wittgenstein commented on this: "Moore's paradox can be expressed as follows: 'I believe it is the case' is used like the assertion 'It is the case'; and yet the *assumption:* I believe it is the case, is not used like the assumption it is the case". So it is possible to assume that something is the case, without believing that what is assumed is true. Wittgenstein told Moore that the example "just shows that logic isn't as simple as logicians think it is". And it isn't as simple as this book sometimes makes out. In 1938 (*Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief,* p 2) Wittgenstein is reported to have said: "If I had to say what is the main mistake made by philosophers of the present generation, including Moore, I would say that it is that when language is looked at, what is looked at is a form of words and not the use made of the form of words". So what are we to do when we cannot, as is often the case in the Bible, understand what the use of certain expressions was? Wittgenstein's criticism of Moore and others also applies to a great deal in Mr Gibson's book as it also does to the work of Frege, Geach and Dummett. Wittgenstein told Moore in explaining what he meant by saying that logic isn't as simple as logicians think: "In particular: that contradiction isn't the *unique* thing people think it is. It is not the *only* logically inadmissible form and it is, under certain circumstances, admissible".

When Mr Gibson talks about "the most basic assumptions of theology" he does not tell us what these assumptions are. Many of his criticisms of what some have written about the Bible deserve serious consideration, but it is not easy to see how such criticisms can be applied to anything that could be called "a basic assumption of theology". It is pointless to speak in this way unless one is able to give an example of what is meant.

There is a great deal about proper names, including comments about what is called the proper name Yahweh. (The Je-

hovah Witnesses would have little sympathy with them.) "I do not dispute", Mr Gibson claims, "that 'God' in some English theology purports to function as a PN, although in agreement with Durrant I do not think it succeeds" (p 154). (He does not tell us what English theology he has in mind. Would what I was once told by an Englishman in Khartoum that the Anglican Cathedral was the centre of the British race in the Sudan be an example of English theology? Or perhaps a statement of a Yorkshire friend of mine that it was the Sudan Club without the bar would!)

What does it mean to ask: "Is 'God' a proper name"? "At various times in the past and in various ways, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets; but in our own times, the last days, he has spoken to us through his Son, the Son that he has appointed to inherit everything and through whom he made everything there is. He is the radiant light of God's glory and the perfect copy of his nature, sustaining the universe by his powerful command; and now that he has destroyed the defilement of sin, he has gone to take his place in heaven at the right hand of divine Majesty. So he is now as far above the angels as the title which he has inherited is higher than their own name". (*Hebrews* 1:1–4). (This translation of the Jerusalem Bible may, no doubt, raise many problems.) Gibson has this in mind in his comments on Exodus 3: 10–15 (pp 159-60) where he says: "The sequence, first, uses the verb *'hyh* in 3:12 in a context of revelatory fellowship with a redemptive teleology: *ky- 'hyh 'mk* ('Certainly I will be with thee')". Now if 'Yahweh' is a proper name in this passage in Exodus, why isn't 'God' a proper name in the Epistle to the Hebrews? (cf. St Luke 18:13: "God be merciful to me a sinner". In Welsh: ''O Dduw, bydd drugarog wrthyf bechadur".) Claiming that (p 154): "A PN's translation is only properly understood if it is characterized as transliteration from language A to language B" hardly overcomes the difficulties involved in the examples just mentioned.

Do we properly understand what 'Yahweh' means? In the case of Yahweh many of the events that are recorded in the Bible (like the one in Exodus 3) are ones that

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are not understood. Consider what we read in the Psalms (24: 8): "Who is this King of glory? Yahweh the strong, the valiant, Yahweh valiant in batttle!" What does 'glory', a word which we find in so many places in the Bible, mean? (I am not suggesting that it has only one meaning.) The word does not appear in the index of the book and it is only mentioned in criticism of Bultmann's commentary on St John's Gospel, where we are told that Bultmann's view is "a systematic distortion which produces semantic and theological misunderstanding of a text". (p 175) But just how does one decide that this is a *theological misunderstanding?* Doesn't that presuppose that understanding already exists? If there is no understanding of the word 'glory' how can we say that something is a misunderstanding? (Compare Wittgenstein's question: "How can one talk about 'understanding' and 'not understanding' a proposition? Surely it is not a proposition until it's understood?" *Philosophical Grammar*, p 39). It is not good enough just to criticise what Bultmann says about 'glory' if one doesn't know what it means oneself. (I am not suggesting that Bultmann did know what it means.) What grounds are there for such criticism? So how far does 'analytical empiricism' take us along "a route to a theory of meaning", particularly if that is going to be a theory of understanding?

Wittgenstein said: "Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language", but when Mr Gibson quotes this (p 208) he leaves out the first two words! Is this meant to suggest that what he is doing has nothing to do with philosophy? In quoting *Philosophical Investigations* (p 104) Mr Gibson attempts to give an example so that the passage becomes: "We predicate of the thing [e.g. biblical language] what lies in the method of representing it". Some unwary reader, particularly, perhaps, a "biblical scholar", not well acquainted with Wittgenstein's writings, might think that the sentence just quoted is as Wittgenstein wrote it. But the square brackets and the words inside them "[e.g. biblical language]" are not an example that Wittgenstein gave. And would he have given this

as an example of what he had in mind? Here Wittgenstein is arguing against the views he had held when he wrote the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and which he criticised in the *Philosophical Grammar* when he asked (p 212): "What gives us the idea that there is a kind of agreement between thought and reality?" But what is this biblical language? What I find in the Bible are some things that I do have some understanding of, but many others which I do not understand. What was it that so frightened the shepherds at the birth of Jesus? The angel of the Lord and the glory of the Lord. And these are? What way is there of understanding this at all? If there is none, how can we predicate of it what belongs to our way of representing it? Do we have a way of representing it? Maurice Drury tells us that Wittgenstein said to him: "If you can accept the miracle that God became man, then all these difficulties are as nothing. For then it is impossible for me to say what form the record of such an event should take". Wittgenstein said "should take" not "did take", and in saying that does not pay sufficient attention to the records we do have. And when we examine those we find that there are things in them that are not understood.

In the *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein says (p 102): "The strict and clear rules of the logical structure of sentences seems to us to be something which, as it were, lies behind them – in the medium of the understanding". It is, it seems, these "strict and clear rules" that Geach has attempted to persuade us rule in theology too, but when we try to apply them there we should ask ourselves: "Do we understand what we are applying them to?" and if not, one should not deceive oneself by imagining that one does.

Mr Gibson's book may bring people to realise that there are things in the Bible that it is not easy to understand, and which they thought they did understand. That will be for the good. But it may also lead them to accept solutions which are not solutions. And that will not be for the good.

HUGH PRICE