

Notes

FOREWORD

1. Gabriel Vahanian, "God as Israel's Problem," in *Reading Communities Reading Scripture*, ed. Gary A. Phillips and Nicole Wilkinson Duran (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2002), p. 256.
2. See Gabriel Vahanian, "God as Israel's Problem," and also "The Denatured Nature of Ethics: In Praise of the Secular," in *Philosophie de la religion entre éthique et ontologie*, ed. Marco M. Olivetti (Padua, Italy: CEDAM, 1996), pp. 501–515.
3. Sylvia Poggioli, "Pope Francis: Even Atheists Can Be Redeemed," *NPR parallels*, May 29, 2013, accessed on May 30, 2013, <http://www.npr.org/blogs/parallels/2013/05/29/187009384/Pope-Francis-Even-Atheists-Can-Be-Redeemed>.
4. Vahanian, "The Denatured Nature of Ethics," p. 510.

INTRODUCTION GABRIEL VAHANIAN: FROM THE DEATH OF GOD TO WORDING AND WORLDING

1. Gabriel Vahanian, "The Empty Cradle," *Theology Today* 13 (January 1957), p. 521.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 522.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 523.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 525.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*, p. 526.
7. Gabriel Vahanian, "Biblical Symbolism and Man's Religious Quest," *The Journal of Religion* 38, no. 4 (October 1958), p.226. Originally published as Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper, 1957), p. 16.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 226.

9. Ibid., p. 227.
10. Ibid., p. 228.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid., p. 229.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid., p. 232.
15. Ibid., p. 233.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid., p. 234.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid., p. 235.
20. Ibid., p. 237.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid., p. 238.
23. Gabriel Vahanian, *The Death of God: The Culture of Our Post-Christian Era* (New York: George Braziller, 1961), p. xxxii
24. Ibid.
25. Gabriel Vahanian, "Introduction," in Karl Barth, *The Faith of the Church*, ed. Jean-Louis Louba, trans. Gabriel Vahanian (New York: Meridian Books, 1958), p. 7.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid., p. 8.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid., p. 10.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid., p. 11.
36. Ibid., p. 12.
37. Ibid., p. 14.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid., p. 15.
41. Ibid., p. 17.
42. Ibid., p. 18.
43. Gabriel Vahanian, "From Karl Barth to Theology," *Social Research* 41, no. 2 (Summer 1974), p. 265.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid., p. 267.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid., p. 268.
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid.

51. Ibid.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid., p. 270.
56. Ibid.
57. Ibid., p. 271.
58. Ibid., p. 272.
59. Ibid., p. 273.
60. Ibid.
61. Ibid.
62. Ibid., p. 274.
63. Ibid., p. 275.
64. Ibid.
65. Ibid.
66. Ibid.
67. Vahanian, *The Death of God*, p. 4.
68. Ibid., p. 5.
69. Ibid., p. 49.
70. Ibid., p. 50.
71. Ibid.
72. Ibid.
73. Ibid., p. 57.
74. Ibid., p. 117.
75. Ibid., pp. 117–118.
76. Ibid., p. 137.
77. Ibid., p. 139.
78. Ibid., p. 146.
79. Ibid., p. 187.
80. Ibid., p. 196.
81. Ibid.
82. Ibid., p. 197.
83. Ibid., p. 231.
84. Gabriel Vahanian, *Wait without Idols* (New York: George Braziller, 1964), p. xii.
85. Ibid., p. xiii.
86. Ibid., p. 24.
87. Ibid.
88. Ibid., p. 36.
89. Ibid., p. 46.
90. Ibid., p. 229.
91. Ibid., p. 234.
92. Ibid., p. 243.
93. Gabriel Vahanian, *No Other God* (New York: George Braziller, 1966), p. xii.
94. Ibid., p. 4.
95. Ibid., p. 5.
96. Ibid., p. 8.

97. Ibid.
98. Ibid., p. 14.
99. Ibid., p. 17.
100. Ibid., pp. 27–28.
101. Ibid., pp. 33–34.
102. Ibid., p. 34.
103. Ibid.
104. Ibid., p. 42.
105. Ibid., p. 47.
106. Ibid., p. 56.
107. Ibid., p. 61.
108. Ibid., p. 63.
109. Ibid., p. 69.
110. Ibid., p. 70.
111. Ibid., p. 83.
112. Clayton Crockett, “Foreword,” in Gabriel Vahnanian, *Anonymous God: An Essay on Not Dreading Words*, trans. Noëlle Vahanian (1989; repr., Aurora, CO: Davies Group Publishers, 2002), p. xi.
113. Vahanian, *Anonymous God*, p. 2.
114. Ibid., p. 16.
115. Ibid., p. 41.
116. Ibid., p. 42.
117. Ibid., p. 46.
118. Ibid.
119. Ibid., p. 47.
120. Ibid., p. 53.
121. Ibid., p. 67.
122. Ibid., p. 70.
123. Ibid., p. 71.
124. Ibid.
125. Ibid., p. 87.

I WORDING THE WORLD AND WORLDDING THE WORD

1. A legend of Jewish folklore that Michael Kogan seems particularly fond of telling and which, as reported verbatim by John L. Allen Jr. (“Smashing the ‘Idol’ of Religious Superiority: Pluralist Theologians Gather in England for International Summit,” *National Catholic Reporter*, September 19, 2003), should especially be heard by self-assured advocates of so-called religions of the Book, who tend altogether to miss the point of what that Book is all about, namely, a debunking of even what it means by “God” or, for that matter, by “idol”—be that, rather than as usual someone else’s, an idol of our own

- making. Father of faith that he was, Abraham does not shrink from laying bare his own insofar as his father is not only pointed out as an idolater but, even worse, as a stubborn maker of idols (cf. also by Michael Kogan, *Opening the Covenant: A Jewish Theology of Christianity* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2008]). Centuries later, Abraham's impertinence is exemplified by John Calvin's own when he rebukes not so much the imagination itself as the imaginings of mere humans shopping for idols the factory of which is none other than their own nature (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, I, XI, 8).
2. Matthew 21:12; Mark 1:35; Luke 19:45; John 2:19, etc.
 3. Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity* (1841; repr., New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1957); (see also Preface, p. xxxvii: "Theology Is Anthropology").
 4. Methodological atheism is an option that allows for alternatives even while claiming them to be invalid if and to the extent that it can validate itself; in contrast, the atheism I here call confessional consists, however self-revelatory its fashion, in some kind of declaration of unbelief that, by the same token, is not only based, by definition, on the presumption of the nonexistence of God but is also oblivious of the fact that the mere statement of a fact is by itself already a matter of fiction: fact or fiction, both words stem from the same root; methodological atheism not only allows for that but also, like theism, at its best, does not take God for granted, either.
 5. Matthew 4:6–7; Luke 10–12.
 6. G. Elijah Dann, *Leaving Fundamentalism* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2004). Darrell J. Fasching, *No One Left Behind: Is Universal Salvation Biblical* (Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, 1996, 2011).
 7. Psalm 94:9; Exodus 4:11; Proverbs 20:12.
 8. It is written in the Scriptures: "I will speak to my own people through strange languages and through the lips of foreigners. But even then, they will not listen to me," says the LORD (I Corinthians 14:21 NLT; Isaiah 28:11; I Corinthians 14:26).
 9. Martin Luther, *Christian Liberty*, ed. Harold J. Grim (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1957).
 10. Michel de Certeau et al., *Le mépris du monde* (Paris: Cerf, 1965), p. 191.
 11. Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964).
 12. Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, vol. 2 (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1941), p. 166.
 13. Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers, *La nouvelle alliance: Métamorphose de la science* (Paris: Gallimard, 1979), p. 194.
 14. Emmanuel Mesthene, "Technology and Humanistic Values," in *Technology, Human Values and Leisure* (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1971), p. 53 (my emphasis); cf. Guenter Howe, *Gott und die Technik. Die Verantwortung der Christenheit für die wissenschaftlich-technische Welt* (Hamburg-Zürich: Furche-Theologischer Verlag, 1971), p. 85. Cf. Against a more recent background of the end of history or the clash of civilizations, James Joyce, *Ulysses* (New York: Random House, 1986), p. 28: "History, Steven said, is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake."

15. To which, unlike Barth, Tillich becomes sensitive during his “retirement” at Chicago and his tempered version of the Sacred practically redefined as a “passion” for the profane rather than its normally exclusivist antithesis—thereby exemplifying another Tillichian tour de force like his equation of “theonomy” with the Protestant notion of the secular. Cf. Paul Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of World Religions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963); Gabriel Vahanian, *Tillich and the New Religious Paradigm* (Aurora, CO : Davies Group Publishers, 2004).
16. Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), p. 58.
17. Rudolf Bultmann, *The Presence of Eternity: History and Eschatology*, Gifford Lectures 1955 (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), p. 35.
18. Jacques Maritain, “Signe et symbole,” *Revue thomiste* (April 1938), p. 315.
19. Ian Ramsey, *Religious language* (New York: Macmillan, 1957).
20. Beyond saying that he did not read books but wrote them, Tillich would object to Harnack’s historicist perfectionism, whereas Barth, whose *Dogmatik* suddenly switched from *Christliche* to *Kirchliche*, was all the more overwhelmed by the Christomonistic sirens call of a ghettoizing church. Could it be that the arch-heretic Marcion’s depiction of Christianity as an *orphaned* religion is less antiquated than tradition would have us think? Cf. G. Vahanian, “Une religion orpheline: Le christianisme selon Marcion,” *Foi & Vie* 104 (2005), p. 1.
21. John Macquarie, *An Existentialist Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1955); *Principles of Christian Theology* (New York: Scribner’s, 1966).
22. Gerhard Kittell (ed.), *Theologisches Wörterbuch Zum Neuen Testament* (1933; repr., Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1960).
23. Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), p. 346: “But he [Jesus] puts metaphorical sign language at the centre of his preaching: the parables, which are an undogmatic way of speaking of God.”

2 THE KENOTIC UTOPIANISM OF LANGUAGE

1. Giorgio Agamben, “Propos . . .,” *Bulletin de l’Association freudienne* 2 (1983), p. 27.
2. Giorgio Agamben, “Verbum sine verbo,” *Discours psychanalytique*, no. 6 (1983), p. 65.
3. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1961).
4. Isaiah 28:11; cf. Exodus 28:13; Proverbs 27:2.
5. I Corinthians 4 : 13 (Psalm 116:10).
6. Jacques Lacan, *Le séminaire XI* (Paris: Points/Sciences humaines, 1990). “ . . . of that which is written I have more than *I believe (or think) I wrote*” as would imply this typically lacanian contraction or contraption of *j’écris* and *je crois*.

7. Moustapha Safouan, *L'Inconscient et son scribe* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1982), p. 59 (translation author). ("La barre qui figure dans le schéma du signe représente bien une union: Seulement, ce n'est pas cette union du signifiant et du signifié qui en est le principe, mais, comme le disait Lacan, leur séparation. Non pas au sens spatial de l'existence parallèle, de chaque côté de la barre, d'un signifiant et d'un signifié. Bien plutôt, ce dernier doit-il advenir et ce que la barre représente, c'est ce qui, avec le signifiant se profile tant comme appel que comme résistance au signifié: une barre à franchir.")
8. Whether actually or virtually and ranging its language from somatic to semiotic by way of semantic, from preverbal infant to muted biophysiological by way of body language.
9. Cf. Georges Gusdorf, *La Parole* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963), p. 9.
10. *Scripta* (what's already written) in contrast to *Scriptura* (what's yet to be written): cf. Gabriel Vahanian, "Scripta et scriptura—l'ardoise et de le dictionnaire: Par delà le don et la dette," in *Le don et la dette*, ed. Marco M. Olivetti (Padova: Cedam [Biblioteca dell'Archivio di Filosofia], 2004).
11. Martin Luther, *Christian Liberty*, ed. Harold J. Grim (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1957).
12. Noam Chomsky, "Le langage est le miroir de l'esprit," in *L'Année littéraire 1972*, ed. Maurice Nadeau (Paris: La Quinzaine littéraire, 1973), p. 263.
13. Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Man and Language," in *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, ed. and trans. David E. Linge (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), pp. 59–68 (especially pp. 62–63).
14. Safouan, *L'Inconscient et son scribe*.
15. Martin Heidegger, "Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry," in *Existence and Being* (Chicago: Regnery, 1949), pp. 301, 303.
16. Ernst Cassirer, "Le Langage et la construction du monde comme objet," in *Essais sur le langage*, ed. Jean-Claude Pariente (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1969), pp. 59–63.
17. "Zion was built by the LORD on the holy mountain, and he loves that city more than any other place in all of Israel. Zion, you are the city of God, and wonderful things are told about you. Egypt, Babylonia, Philistia, Phoenicia, and Ethiopia are some of those nations that know you, and their people all say, 'I was born in Zion.' God Most High will strengthen the city of Zion. Then everyone will say, 'We were born here too'" (Psalm 87:1–5 CEV).
18. Recall Mircea Eliade's laconic definition, quoted from memory, of the sacred as that which is all that the profane is not and, conversely, of the profane as all that the sacred is not; and compare Tillich's concern with the secular for whose process he would rather coin "profaning" than incur the blemish of "profanation."
19. Jacques Lacan, "Fonction et champ de la parole et du langage (Discours de Rome)," *Écrits* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1966), p. 262. Translated as Anthony Wilden and Jacques Lacan, *The Language of the Self* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1968), pp. 24–25. Cf. Also "L'Instance de la lettre dans l'inconscient, ou la raison depuis Freud," *Écrits* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil,

- 1966), p. 508: "...la métaphore se place au point précis où le sens se produit dans le non-sens."
20. Lacan, "Fonction et champ," p. 299: "Je m'identifie dans le langage, mais seulement à m'y perdre" (I identify myself in and through language and there only lose myself).
 21. Rudolf Bultmann, "The Idea of God and Modern Man," *Journal for Theology and the Church*, vol. 2: *Translating Theology into the Modern Age* (Harper & Row, NY: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck, Tübingen], 1965); *Glauben und Verstehen*, vol. 4, 3rd ed. (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1975), pp. 113–127.
 22. According to its etymology, anecdote refers to that which happens when you don't expect it—and perhaps only by postponing its happening or having it approved by powers-that-be generally dubious of anything new (Luke 17:11–19; Gabriel Vahanian, "Enbouchure du corps," in *Sujets à croire: Questions de théologie et de psychanalyse, en hommage à Roland Sublon*, ed. René Heyer [Strasbourg: Presses universitaires de Strasbourg, 2002]).
 23. Cf. Edgar Morin for whom primordial and generic unity is what allows for multiplicity unless the human is, as a social entity, severed from its biological entity (*La méthode*, vol. 5 [Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2001]).
 24. Not to be confused with Kierkegaard's, Nietzsche's, Heidegger's, or Deleuze's understanding of "repetition," which, as pointed out by Giorgio Agamben, rather than to what has subsequently been the case or, what he calls "*le retour de l'identique*," is a return, a recollection, of that which, instead, still continues to be possible ("Face au cinéma et à l'Histoire: à propos de Jean-Luc Godard," *Le Monde*, Paris, Octobre 6, 1995).
 25. See note 10 above.
 26. Lacan, "Fonction et champ," *Écrits*, p. 276 (translation mine). "C'est le monde des mots qui crée le monde des choses, d'abord confondues dans l'hic et nunc du tout en devenir, en donnant son être concret à leur essence, et sa place partout à ce qui est de toujours: κτήμα ἐς αἰεί. L'homme parle donc, mais c'est parce que le symbole l'a fait homme."
 27. Cited after a former student's paper in my archives.
 28. Lacan, "L'Instance," *Écrits*, p. 524; actually quoted from Freud's thirty-first lecture of 1932 ("Wherever it was, there should I be") to which Lacan adds: "Quel est donc cet autre à qui je suis plus attaché qu'à moi, puisqu'au sein le plus assenti de mon identité à moi-même, c'est lui qui m'agite?"

3 GOD AND THE FALLACY OF IDENTITY: A THEOLOGICAL DISINTOXICATION OF THE WEST

1. The term "christomorphic," introduced in the Preface, draws attention to the fact that no reference is intended to the traditional *Christological identification* of the Christ with Jesus. Cf. Rudolf Bultmann, *Glauben und Verstehen*, vol. 4

- (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1975), 3rd ed., pp. 113–127; “The Idea of God and Modern Man,” *Journal for Theology and the Church*, vol. 2: *Translating Theology into the Modern Age* (New York: Harper & Row; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1965). Cf. also Calvin’s commentary on Psalm 33:6, in which he clearly displays a christomorphic understanding of language.
2. C. N. Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1944), p. 29.
 3. Most abhorrent for its colonialist overtones of annexation is to me the newly minted term of “inculturation.”
 4. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1961), p. 58: “The philosophical self is not the human being, not the human body, or the human soul, with which psychology deals, but rather the metaphysical subject, the limit of the world—not a part of it.”
 5. Bluntly cued by Isaiah 28:11–12, Paul addresses the mess in Corinth by recalling that even “in the Law it is written: With other tongues / and through the lips of foreigners / I will speak to this people, / but even then they will not listen to me, / says the Lord” (I Corinthians 14:20).
 6. On the notions of person, individual, and identity—individual, social, cultural, etc.—the complexity of the problematic as we have noted becomes incandescent with Lacan. His incomparable confession, “Je m’identifie dans le langage mais seulement à m’y perdre,” is reverberated throughout his essay on “Fonction et champ de la parole et du langage (Discours de Rome),” *Écrits* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1966), p. 262. Originally published as Anthony Wilden and Jacques Lacan, *The Language of the Self* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1968); see also Gabriel Vahanian, “La foi en Dieu et l’utopie technicienne,” *Lumière & Vie* 22 (1974), p. 116: “L’identité chrétienne.” Maurice Boutin, “Virtualité et identité: L’identité narrative selon Paul Ricoeur et ses apories,” *Études Théologiques et Religieuses* 83 (2008), p. 3. “Personne et quête d’identité,” *La Personne, Corps, Esprit, Valeurs*, Geneva, 2002 (a colloquium organized by Roberta De Monticelli [Département de philosophie], B. Fantini [Faculté de médecine], and R. Colis [Institut d’Histoire de la médecine et de la santé]).
 7. Cf. Maurice Boutin, “Conceiving the Invisible: Joseph C. McClelland’s Modal Approach to Theological and Religious Pluralism,” in *The Three Loves: Philosophical, Theological, and World Religions*, ed. Robert L. Culley and William Klempa (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), p. 15. Cf. I Corinthians 4:7; Calvin, *Institutes* II/2/11; Andrew Rice, “The Elusive Small-House Utopia,” *The New York Times Magazine*, October 17, 2010.
 8. J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975).
 9. Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), p. 3.
 10. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* I/1/1.
 11. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I/84/3 (Cambridge: Blackfriars, 1964–1981). And also, Sancti Thomae Aquinatis. Opera Omnia iussu impensa que

- Leonis XIII P. M. edita, t. 4–12: *Summa theologiae* Ex Tyographia Poluglotta S. C. de Propaganda Fide, Romae, 1888–1889.
12. Fabric: a notion not to be confused with the “knowledge industry” to which today’s university has been debased and is rightfully denounced by Wilfred C. Smith, “Religious Pluralism and Its Relation to Theology—and of Any of These Two to Each Other,” in *The Three Loves*, p. 180.
 13. Paul Chauchard, *Le langage et la pensée* ([Que sais-je?, 1956]; repr., Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1968), p. 27.
 14. Not unlike the infant (*infans*, that which does not speak). Yeshayahou Leibowitz, *Corps et esprit: Le problème psycho-physique* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 2010).
 15. Among others, Chauchard, *Le langage et la pensée*, p. 27; Hans Jonas, *Puissance ou impuissance de la subjectivité? Le problème psychophysique aux avant-postes du Principe responsabilité*, traduit de l’allemand par Christian Armsperger (Paris: Cerf, 2000); Hans Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life: Toward a Philosophical Biology* (New York: Haper and Row, 1966); Leibowitz, *Corps et esprit*.
 16. Georg Christoph Lichtenberg, *Œuvres complètes II—Anthologie de l’humour noir*, ed. André Breton, trans. Albert Béguin (1979; repr., Paris: Gallimard [Bibliothèque de la Pléiade], 1992).
 17. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus logico-positivus*, 6.41.
 18. *Ibid.*, 5.41.
 19. *Ibid.*, 5.41.
 20. *Ibid.*, 6.43. A cryptic phrase for a cogent and illuminating discussion of which, see Boutin, “Conceiving the Invisible,” pp. 8–10. This phrase, he contends, is “the exact translation of a basic word in western thought: the word *res*,” as, e.g., in *res publicum*, literally the public “Thing,” though not merely in the sense of “objects,” but in the sense of the French *objet*, that is, of the subject-matter of what we talk about; that is, of what as such lies both outside and inside language insofar as language itself lies in the paradoxical dialectic of that which is neither more nor less outside the inside than, conversely, the inside is inside the outside; or again, in this view of Bultmann’s distinction between *was* and *dass*, lies between the realities, various and sundry, of the Real and the Real itself, between inside and outside, between determination and indeterminacy, between the Greek *pragmata* and the Latin *res*—so-called “reality” actually being a “diminutive” of the Real, that of which we speak when we speak about its “what-ness.” So far as I am concerned, however, two or three things are worth keeping in mind: (1) Identity, which despite common assumptions consists in not repeating itself and is more like a constant dress rehearsal that dresses and redresses the past and, time and again, addresses it to the future—to that which is and was and is to come (in that very biblical order that suggests not the presence of a past but the presentness of that which does not “pass”; not that which, being dated is outdated; not even so much a given as a gift, never outdated and which, though historic, is not merely historical but is “eschatic,” and as such an “event.”) (2) Person: an existential/ontological notion that, in an age subjected to the overall tendency of reducing everything, including happiness or salvation to the neurobiological syndrome

of self-salvation from (rather than by) either God or oneself, “person” tends to become a luxury—one that even God can no longer afford unless he should stand for the only self-worth realizing, my own or, rather, some disillusioned preprogrammed semblance of it I am allowed to impersonate as an individual whose identity lies precisely in being denied access to anything like personhood unless I was myself the key to it. And, indeed, it would be easy to show that, in spite of the apparent rise of secularism, biology has been the science least capable of doing without the officially much derided divine hypothesis. (3) God is a matter of words: at least Bultmann would never forget this main asset of the mythic tradition, whether biblical or Greek. A God who no sooner speaks than his word is worlded is a God who, for the sake of us his creatures, allows himself to be forgotten and prevents us from sentencing ourselves to oblivion. Whether the incarnation is a Christian invention or not, recurrent is, in pagan as well as Christian myths, the idea of a God that appears incognito to mortals whose destiny is ultimately shaped by their reaction to such an encounter as anonymous as those evoked in the parable of the Last Judgment.

21. Leibowitz, *Corps et esprit*, p. 101.
22. Cf. Maurice Boutin, “Le Big Bang et le Christ Omega, L’univers en expansion,” 49 pages (public lecture, Centre Teilhard-de-Chardin de Montréal, November 10, 2009, Montreal); “Le croire—Prudence et passion: Georges Lemaître et Pierre Teilhard de Chardin,” 30 pages (public lecture, Centre Teilhard-de-Chardin de Montréal, October 12, 2010, Montreal).
23. Cf. Edgar Morin, *La méthode*, vol. 5 (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2001); the words in quotations are meant to capture and emphasize the gist of Morin’s and Leibowitz’s objection to the “destitution of the subject.”
24. Chauchard, *Le Langage et la pensée*, p. 31.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 72.
28. Maurice Blanchot, *Celui qui ne m’accompagnait pas* (1953; repr., Paris: Gallimard “L’imaginaire” 300, 1999), p. 119 (translation mine). Chauchard, *Le Langage et la pensée*, p. 72.
29. Blanchot, *Celui qui ne m’accompagnait pas*, p. 119 (translation mine).
30. Chauchard, *Le Langage et la pensée*, p. 31.
31. Jacques Derrida and Elisabeth Roudinesco, *De quoi demain... dialogue* (Paris: Fayard/Galilée, 2001; Paris: Flammarion, 2003).
32. *I, it, they* speak (all) at the same time.
33. In the chapter on “L’humanité de l’humanité,” Edgar Morin defines the hologram as “Une image où chaque point contient la presque totalité de l’information sur l’objet représenté. Le principe hologrammique signifie que non seulement la partie est dans le tout, mais que le tout est inscrit d’une certaine façon dans la partie. Ainsi la cellule contient en elle la totalité de l’information génétique, ce qui permet en principe le clonage; la société en tant que tout, via sa culture, est présente en l’esprit de chaque individu.” *La méthode*, p. 282.

34. Depending on as well the grammar as the context, *personne* means either a person or nobody.
35. Archibald Macleish, *J. B.* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin [14th Printing], 1958).
36. John Hick, "The Next Step beyond Dialogue," in *The Myth of Religious Superiority*, ed. Paul F. Knitter (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2005), p. 5.
37. Georges Poulet, "Poésie du cercle et de la sphère," *Cahiers de l'Association internationale des études françaises* 10 (1958), pp. 44–57.
38. Cf. H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper & Row, 2001); Gabriel Vahanian, *No Other God: Wordng the World and Worlding the Word* (New York: George Braziller, 1966; Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009).
39. Poulet, "Poésie du cercle et de la sphère," p. 48.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 51.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 51.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 56.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 57.
44. F. Malval, in Poulet, "Poésie du cercle et de la sphère," p. 56.
45. Boutin, "Virtualité et identité," p. 8: "L'identité, c'est la manière souveraine de se perdre en cherchant la mélodie des choses ailleurs que dans les choses. Quand on entre en soi-même, il peut arriver qu'on erre longtemps sans jamais rencontrer personne."
46. Georgio Agamben, *L'Eglise et le Royaume*, in *Saint Paul, juif et apôtre des nations*, ed. André Vingt-Trois (Paris: Parole et silence, 2009), p. 27.
47. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*: "Middle English: from Anglo-Norman French and Old French *parochie*, from late Latin *parochia*, from Greek *paroikia*, 'sojourning', based on *para-* 'beside, subsidiary' + *oikos* 'dwelling.'" Though stemming from the same root, *oikia* tends to designate the gathering of the various members of a household (family as well as servants or slaves) rather than the fixed and more or less permanent housing itself, i.e., the *oikos* whose Latin version, *domus*, finally designates the majestic cupola of a cathedral church and its eschatic implication of God's household as that body of Christ in and through which there is neither master nor slave, no city of God except that of God's own domesti-city, here and now, once and for all foreshadowed by the parish. Cf. e.g., I Timothy 3:5 or more especially 3:15–16 where the household of God is immediately cast in Paul's christomorphic language (RSV). With thanks to Gabriella Aragione, see also Deidre Good, who, in *Jesus' Family Values* (New York: Church Publishing, 2006), simply points out on p. 25 that in general *oikos* has architectural connotations, while *oikia* connotes sociology, that is, a composition of the household.
48. Hick, "The Next Step beyond Dialogue," pp. 3–4.
49. Smith, "Religious Pluralism," p. 281: "...without Greek thought, theology would not have arisen—theology is basically a Graeco-Roman contribution. Other religious traditions may have individuals we can call theologians, none has a theology."
50. In this connection as on the other hand with the distinction between secularity and secularism see also Joseph C. McLelland, *Prometheus Rebound*:

The Irony of Atheism (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1988), pp. 6–7, 38, 98, 185.

51. Walter Kirn, “Little Brother Is Watching,” *The New York Times*, October 15, 2010.

4 THE SECULAR, A CHRISTIAN CONTRIBUTION TO THE EAST/WEST DIALOGUE

1. Commonwealth Club, San Francisco, September 15, 2005.
2. T. D. Lyssenko (1898–1975). An advocate of a biological theory based on dialectical materialism as opposed to one inspired by capitalism and yet dismissed by Stalin when Johann (born Gregor) Mendel (a founder of modern genetics with his theory of heredity, 1822–1884) was rehabilitated in the Soviet Union.
3. Josef Mengele (1911–1979), nicknamed The Angel of Death at Auschwitz, practiced live experiments on human beings.
4. The use of a word varies from one discipline to another and, in current usage, environment (*Umwelt*), as Heidegger would say, is not always distinguished from world (*Welt*): only for humans does the natural environment, once it is grasped both as a given and a gift, turn into a world.
5. G. Elijah Dann, *Leaving Fundamentalism* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008) was very much a passion for me.
6. Put differently, no sooner are they grounded (electric current) than they are also likely to be grounded (airplane).
7. Stanislas Breton, *L'avenir du christianisme* (Paris: Desclée de Brower, 1999), pp. 190–191, 232–233.
8. “Opinion” was the original meaning of “dogma” as fostered, nurtured, and finally weaned on the liturgical practice of the church.
9. John 14,6: “I am the way, truth and life.” Cf. also Acts 9,2; 24,22 or *Didachè, The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*: “There are two ways, one of life and one of death, and there is a great difference between the two ways.” J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers* (London: Macmillan, 1907; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1970), pp. 217–225.
10. From discourse about being (ontology) to discourse about the way (odology) In *L'avenir du christianisme*, Stanislas Breton asserts that “the language of the way is not peculiar to Christianity. In the Far East, by whatever name, there is no talk of anything else” (translation mine, p. 95). Pointing out affinities of ontology with a *theologia gloriae*, like that of the Middle Ages, he likewise equates odology and a *theologia crucis* like that of the Lutheran Reformation (pp. 110–115).
11. *Émonder*, in French.
12. The most scientific view of the world remains a theory: it depends on words—a description remains a description from this or that point of view. The “real” is a fiction as is the sun when it either sets or rises.

13. Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1955).
14. In whatever sense the expression is grasped.
15. A fascinating triptych for which Augustine substitutes yet another—that of memory, understanding, and love (or the will) that further intrigues the inter-course between religion and the secular, because, like the will, love comes before everything except itself: it happens not once upon a time but once for all, ushered in as *kairos* of the temporal and the eternal, of time and space, of spirit and the flesh, as that *kairos* of which language alone is the occasion.
16. Contrasting Genesis and the creation myth as told by Enuma Elish, it appears that, in the latter, cosmogony soon turns into a thematic of theogony and identity into a quest of origins. At best, nature is the space of creation. In Genesis, the word (language) is the space of creation: God speaks and the thing happens and is. Nothing is that is not spoken for (cf. Gabriel Vahanian, *Anonymous God* [Aurora, CO: Davies Group Publishers, 2001]). Nothing happens that does not happen once for all and just that is what happens all the time. Impossible? What else is possible? And is not possible only that which seems impossible? Why not? Genesis was written after the Exodus from Egypt to the Promised Land, from the sacred and its repressive social system to the land of milk and honey, a land Moses himself will never enter. Never achieved, utopia is always possible. Once achieved it is no longer possible. Utopia and totalitarianism don't mix. This utopian reference is of course anachronistic, the word itself having been coined in the sixteenth century by Saint Thomas More almost in the same year as Luther posted his Ninety-Five Theses. More's Utopia is iconoclastic, not totalitarian: there is no mention of an official religion, much less of Roman Catholicism (cf. pp. lxxxvii–lxxxviii and especially pp. 143–144 of the facsimile 1518 Johann Froben edition included in André Prévost, *L'Utopie de Thomas More* [Paris: Mame, 1978]).
17. *De pudicitia* 1; *De Anima* 46.
18. Cf. Alexander Souter, *A Glossary of Late Latin to 600 A.D.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949); R. E. Latham, *Revised Medieval Latin Word-List from British and Irish Sources* (London: Oxford University Press for The British Academy, 1965); Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics II/1*, §36 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1936–1958); Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 46; vol. 3, p. 42; Friedrich Gogarten, *The Reality of Faith* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968), pp. 113, 170; Martin Buber, *Eclipse of God: Studies in the Relation between Religion and Philosophy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1952); Philip Hammond, "Religion and the 'Informing' of Culture," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 3 (1963), p. 1; Peter Berger, *The Social Construction of Reality* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966); Gabriel Vahanian, *The Death of God: The Culture of Our Post-Christian Era* (1957; repr., New York: George Braziller, 1961), pp. 65–69, and more generally, chapter 4; *L'utopie chrétienne* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1992); "Une dogmatique sans dogme: L'impertinente pertinence de Tillich," *Foi & Vie* 97 (1998), p. 3; "The Holy and the Secular versus the Sacred and the Profane," *Being versus Word in Paul Tillich's Theology/Sein versus Wort in Paul Tillich's Theologie*, ed. Gert Hummel and Doris Lax (Berlin and New York: Walter de

- Gruyter, 1999); *Tillich and the New Religious Paradigm* (Aurora, CO: Davies Group, 2004).
19. *Apologeticum*, 17, line 27: “O testimonium animae naturaliter christiana! denique pronuntians haec non ad capitolium, sed ad caelum respicit” (Corpus Christianorum, series latina 1, Typographi Brepols, Turnhout 1954, pp.117–118).
 20. Cf. Vahanian, *L’utopie chrétienne*.
 21. And not its inculturation that, I repeat, smacks of a mole type subversive action.
 22. Commenting on the Gospel of John, Saint Augustine writes: “Understanding is the reward of faith.” “We believe that we might know; for if we wished first to know and then believe, we should not be able either to know or to believe.” *In Joannis evangelium tractatus* 29,6 and 27,9 quoted from Erich Przywara, *An Augustine Synthesis* (New York: Harper/Torchbooks, 1958), p. 58.
 23. Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin (London: Penguin, 1961), book 11, chapters 26–27. See also the Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum, vol. 33 Augustinus, *Confessiones*, ed. P. Knöll (Prague: Vindobonae, 1896).
 24. Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. R. W. Dyson (Cambridge: CUP, 1998), book 12, chapter 3. See also the Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum, vol. 40/1 Augustinus, *De Civitate Dei* (libri i–xiii), ed. E. Hoffmann (Prague: Vindobonae, 1899–1900)
 25. Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, book 15, chapter 7, quoted from C. N. Cochrane’s translation in *Christianity and Classical Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1940), pp. 499–500.
 26. Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, book 11, chapter 1.
 27. If, by ecumenism is meant comparing and contrasting dogmatic or liturgical theories and practices, no major theologian of any confession, much less protestant, has shown much interest in the exercise of such futility. Whether papal infallibility and the priesthood of all believers are compatible or not, the range of Tillich’s ecumenical relevance is best illustrated and sustained by, for example, books such as *The Protestant Era* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), *Theology of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), *Christianity and the Encounter of World Religions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), *The Spiritual Situation in our Technical Situation* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2002), not to mention *On Art and Architecture* or his contention that Picasso’s *Guernica* is a “Protestant” painting. Globalization had not yet, any more than glocalization, become a major issue. Tillich will “bump” into it toward the end of his life with his book on Christianity and the world religions.
 28. See note 9 of chapter 3.
 29. In contrasting East and West, let’s go to extremes and compare Eastern wisdom and Western materialism. The East exports to the West Zen Buddhism and Yoga both of which, at varying degrees, have more to do with peace of mind, bodily relaxation, physical if not outright material well-being. With the recent exceptions of cars and computers, factories are still the best of what the West exports to the East. The goods of life need not be disparaged in favor

- of the Good Life. Abundance need not equal waste. It also calls for frugality in the use of natural resources. When food was scarce, it was easy to call for an ascetic life. Frugality calls for an ethic of stewardship and solidarity in the North and the South as well as in the East and the West. What do both sides, East and West, have in common?—The South. The African peasant listening to his transistor. The Internet.
30. The remarks that follow take their cue from Jean Lartigolle, *Préhistoire de la foi chrétienne: De l'animisme à l'incarnation* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2005).
 31. Cf. Yang MyungSu. 생명에관한햇가지생각

5 NO CHRIST, NO JESUS

1. François Bovon, *Les derniers jours de Jésus. Textes et événements*, Deuxième édition revue et augmentée (Geneva: Labor & Fides, 2004); André de Peretti, *Essai sur l'humour du Christ dans les évangiles* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2004); Bruce Davey, Mel Gibson, and Steven Mc Eveyty, *The Passion of the Christ*, directed by Mel Gibson, released in 2004 by Icon Productions (USA: Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2004), DVD. On following pages, certain passages, formulated differently, harken back to “De l’horreur historique à la passion du Christ: L’humour comme condiment de la christologie” (*Foi et Vie*, 103 [2004], p. 3) and to “Worlding the Word: Language as Milieu of the Word Become Flesh” (*Christ Jesus, the Center of History*, Xth International Paul-Tillich-Symposium, Frankfurt am Main, 2004).
2. Distinguishing the factual side from the receiving side, Tillich writes: “The reports about Jesus of Nazareth are those of Jesus as the Christ, given by persons who had received him as the Christ. Therefore, if one tries to find the real Jesus behind the picture of Jesus as the Christ, it is necessary critically to separate the elements which belong to the factual sides of the event from the elements which belong to the receiving side.” Even so, he adds, there can be “no probable picture which is the result of [such a] tremendous scientific toil.” Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), pp.102–103.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 105.
4. Bovon, *Les derniers jours de Jésus*, p. 9.
5. Ingvald Saelid Gilhus, *Laughing Gods, Weeping Virgins: Laughter in the History of Religions* (Routledge: London, 1997).
6. 1 Corinthians 1, 23.

6 CHRIST BEYOND CHRIST

1. According to the English Standard Version of Psalm 19:1,3,4.
2. John D. Caputo and Gianni Vattimo, *After the Death of God*, ed. Jeffrey W. Robbins (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

3. Colossians 3:11.
4. That reminds me: the subtitle of my first book, *The Death of God*, was deliberately truncated by my editor, a noted literary critic, and changed from “a cultural analysis . . .” to “the culture of our post-Christian era.” Only later did I learn from a reputed French philosopher that analysis, the word expunged, is precisely the term by which ancient Greeks would have rendered what we were beginning to call “deconstruction.”
5. See, e.g., Isaiah 1:13; Matthew 12:1–14; Mark 2:23–28; Luke 6:1–5.
6. Born Johann Paul Friedrich Richter (1763–1825), a German romantic author who, in an apocalyptic scene of the end of the world, has Jesus laconically declaring to his followers: “Sorry, there is no God.”
7. Gabriel Vahanian, *The Death of God: The Culture of Our Post-Christian Era* (New York: George Braziller, 1961; Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009).
8. Personally, I would rather call it a “logocracy,” though its proximity to logomachy and its variants would be annoying and prefer to recall that the “Bible” is not a book but a collection of books (or Latin *scripta*, “that which is written,” including—or not—the so-called *apocrypha*) whose canonical status has varied from one confession to another, not to mention, at random, a professor of Scriptures, Luther and his estimation of the Epistle of James as “a straw epistle” or his rejection of the Revelation of John for being “neither prophetic nor apostolic.” At stake in the composition of the Bible is not so much the “*scripta*” as the kenotic primacy of the “word” (*logos*) become flesh and of its internal hermeneutical authority.

7 LANGUAGE & CO: THE CONDITIONING OF GOD, A FORAY

1. Cf. Steven Ozment, “German Austerity’s Lutheran Core,” *The New York Times*, August 11, 2012.
2. Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), p. 238; *Theology and Symbolism*, ed. F. Ernest Johnson (New York: Harper, 1955).
3. Or literal? For an interesting debate about this question, see A. Durwood Foster, “Rotkäppchen Rescued, or Recasting Rob’s Allegory,” and Rob James, “Three Pigs, Red Riding Hood, and the Wolf Solving the Riddle of Tillich’s Unsymbolic Statements about God,” *Bulletin of the North American Paul Tillich Society* vol. 38, no. 2 (2012), pp., 21–34.
4. Jacques Ellul, *La subversion du Christianisme* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1984), p. 70.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 67.
7. Selected from Michael Krantz and Patrick Cole, “Cashing in on Tomorrow,” *Time Magazine*, vol. 148, no. 4, July 15, 1996.
8. Jacques Ellul, *Changer de révolution* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1982), p. 224.

9. Cf. Jacques Ellul, *La technique, ou l'enjeu du siècle* (Paris: Armand Colin), p. 257; *Les nouveaux possédés* (Paris: Fayard, 1973), p. 259; Maurice Weyembergh, *Entre politique et technique: Aspects de l'utopisme contemporain* (Paris: Librairie philosophique J. Vrin, 1991), p. 156; Patrick Troude-Chastenet, *Lire Ellul* (Bordeaux: Presses universitaires de Bordeaux, 1992), p. 167.
10. Gabriel Vahanian, *La condition de Dieu* (Paris: Edition du Seuil, 1970).
11. Jacques Ellul, *L'espérance oubliée* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972), p. 100.
12. Luc Ferry and François Laruelle, "La cause de l'homme, ou La nouvelle querelle de l'humanisme," *La Décision philosophique* 9 (Paris: Éditions Osiris, 1989), pp. 56–58.
13. François Laruelle, *Le Christ futur, une leçon d'hérésie* (Paris: Exils éditeur, 2002), pp. 62–63 (his emphasis).
14. Adjectival form or "anastasis," Greek for resurrection.
15. II Corinthians 5:16; Romans 9:5.
16. Ellul, *La subversion du christianisme*, p. 70.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 31, 67.
18. Laruelle, *Le Christ futur, une leçon d'hérésie*, p. 147.
19. Ellul, *La subversion du Christianisme*, p. 44.
20. Laruelle, *Le Christ futur, une leçon d'hérésie*.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 147.
22. *Ibid.*, pp. 58, 141.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 48.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 62–63.
25. François Laruelle, *Théorie générale des victimes* (Paris: Mille et une nuits, Librairie Arthème Fayard, 2012). Epigraph: E. T. Noëlle Vahanian.
26. Elisabeth Roudinesco, *Retour sur la question juive* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2009). Gabriel Vahanian, "From Human Being to Being Human: An Impossible Shortcut: A Review Essay on Elisabeth Roudinesco, *Retour sur la question juive*," in *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory* 12, no. 1 (Spring 2012), pp. 115–123.
27. Ellul, *Changer de révolution*, p. 24.
28. Ellul, *L'espérance oubliée*, p. 100.
29. Ellul, *La technique ou l'enjeu du siècle*, p. 388.
30. As implied by the plural and the more baffling title of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1536–1559.
31. According to the Gospel, Jesus comes preaching the kingdom of God. But when Paul, after his conversion, addresses the Jews in Rome who would like to hear him, speaks "urgently of the kingdom of God and [seeks] to convince them . . . by appealing to the law of Moses and the prophets," the Jews won't hear him. And Paul, quoting Isaiah, warns them, "take notice . . . this salvation has been sent to the Gentiles: the Gentiles will listen." Acts 28:21–28.

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