



### The origin of and

A friend invited me to dinner. I had met him a little over a year before, just after he moved to the United States from London. He lived above a parsonage next to a church. I brought a guest with me and we anticipated a good English meal. When we got there we were embarrassed for he had only one can of Campbell's soup on the table. I thought at first that it was only the appetizer and the main course was yet to come, but as nothing followed, it became apparent that it was the entire dinner. I tried to be casual. I began talking of my home in Pennsylvania. Then he told me of his. Most of his life he had lived in a village just outside the suburbs of London. His father commuted to the city while he went to school in the town. The town was in a valley near a tall cliff. There was a monastery built on the cliff. Although the factions were separated geologically, the monastery's evening bell provided the townspeople a daily reminder of its presence.

On the top level of the cliff the monks had their sleeping and eating quarters. The second level, hewn from the rock midway between the top and the bottom of the cliff, housed the facilities for the scribes, their desks and parchment. On the lower level situated midst the foothills beneath the cliff the gardeners worked the land which yielded various fruits and vegetables providing the monastery with a measure of self sufficiency. A single basket lowered by a simple pulley apparatus provided a means by which the monks traveled from level to level.

The people of the town knew very little about what went on in the monastery, but recently it had made the local headlines. It seemed that one monk was designated as the cook. Every day he went to the lower level to gather food which he brought to the upper level in the basket. One day he was returning from the lower level after an exceptionally rich harvest. He reached the top and noticed that the rope had worn thin. He looked around and saw someone close by. Anxiously he cried to his friend, « Give me a hand », but was interrupted before he had finished. The line had broken. The first few words of his cry and a single consonant of the last were heard by the monk on the upper level. As he fell, the vowel and final consonants of the last word were heard by the scribes as the basket plummeted down, past the middle level. Busy at their work they looked up alerted by this verbal fragment. They saw only the myriads of apples, pears, peaches, and other fruits and vegetables that followed him to his death. Noting the incident, thereafter the scribes associated this particular sound « and » with the concept of multiplicity.

