Camus and Bonhoeffer on the Fall

PIETER DE JONG

IN THIS article I intend to compare the thoughts of two modern men on the fall. One is an existentialist thinker who because of his books—mostly novels—has gained wide acclaim as an author. In 1956 he published *The Fall,*[1] for which in 1958 he received the Nobel Prize for Literature. The Frenchman Camus was born in 1913, a year before his father died in the battle of the Marne, and was brought up in Algeria where the environment and the Mediterranean climate made an indelible impression on him. He is called the philosopher of the absurd, and died in a motor accident. The other thinker is a theologian who has gone through existentialism and whose conclusion is that faith is closer to worldliness than to religiosity. His lectures on *Creation and Fall*[2] were published in 1937. The German Bonhoeffer not only wrote about, but actually paid, the cost of discipleship. In 1943 he was taken prisoner by the Gestapo, and he died the death of a martyr in 1945, at the age of thirty-nine.

The scene of Camus' book is Amsterdam. The author has a marvellous ability to describe the places where the characters of his novels live. But he who expects to read a glorification of the peculiar city with gabled roofs and ancient canals will be disappointed. Amsterdam, capital of the low land of which Voltaire once said that it was "un pays de canaux, canards et canaille," represents hell and is the opposite of Sicily with its mountains and heights, which for Camus is more like heaven. Amsterdam, on the edge of the European continent, in the season of autumn when the streets are wet and covered with yellow leaves, is the chosen city for the fall. On the shiny pavement, wrapped in fog, walk the people who fornicate and read the newspaper, representing fallen man. The Zuiderzee and the island of Marken, favourite tourist spot because of the quaint little houses and the national dress of the people, are singularly oppressive for Camus. He calls the island "the most beautiful negative landscape" because of the sand dunes surrounding it which close it off from the rest of the world. The Zuiderzee he calls the dead sea, "steaming like wet washing," suggesting the hopelessness of life without beginning or end.

We find the main character of his novel, Clamence, in one of the sailor cafés, called Mexico-City. There Camus finds the heart of Europe with

1. Albert Camus, *The Fall* (London, 1959). The original, *La Chute*, was published in 1956.

2. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall* (London, 1959). This book, of which the original appeared in 1937 under the title of *Schöpfung und Fall*, consists of a series of lectures on the theological interpretation of Genesis 1–3 given at the University of Berlin in the year 1932–33.

people flocking in from all parts of the continent. In the centre of the inner circle—the canals are so many concentric circles closing people in like hell—is the focal point of fallen life. Clamence is a remarkable character. He spends his days being a "judge-penitent." This means that he talks with various customers who come in for their drink of gin and before they notice it in the course of the conversation he has them crawling at his feet, overflowing with guilt feelings. The way in which he reaches this effect is by constantly confessing to them how bad and double-faced he is himself. It is a refined technique: "The portrait I hold out to my contemporaries becomes a mirror." He describes the procedure himself: "I stand before all humanity . . . saying 'I was the lowest of the low.' Then imperceptibly I pass from the 'I' to the 'we.' When I get to 'This is what we are,' the game is over and I can tell them off." (P. 103.)

Why does Clamence find pleasure in doing this? His answer: "I provoke you into judging yourself, and this relieves me of that much of the burden.... . . . I dominate at last, but forever. Once more I have found a height to which I am the only one to climb and from which I can judge everybody. . . . How intoxicating to feel like God the Father and to hand out definitive testimonials of bad character and habits. I sit enthroned among my bad angels at the summit of the Dutch heaven and I watch ascending towards me as they issue from the fogs and the water, the multitude of the last judgment. . . ." (Pp. 104ff.) Clamence has fallen and this is his way out, the only kind of existence which makes life bearable.

From what did he fall? From the life of success and self-indulgence in Paris where at one time he was a lawyer. Life in Paris was his Eden where he was always on top of things. When facing the judges in defending his clients he actually felt above them, despising them. He would show concern for the orphan and the widow, defending them with good result and without charge, often giving them something extra to live on during the tough days ahead. There he bathed in self-esteem when the wife of a client would press his arm and assure him that nothing could ever repay what he had done for them. He helped blind people cross the street and went out of his way to show sympathy at funerals. He was well liked wherever he went, a symbol of success. Although he was not religious he felt singled out for such an unusual combination of qualities and virtues. And this life with lots of friends and parties went on "until the evening when the music stopped and the lights went out" (p. 24). That evening he was walking on one of the bridges of Paris, quite satisfied with the results of the day, when suddenly he heard laughter behind him although nobody was there. He became nervous and went home, but there, too, he heard it, under his windows. When he looked into the mirror that night, "it seemed to me," he says, "that my smile was double" (p. 30). He had a taste of hell where everyone is marked once for all, without possibility of change for the better. His mark: A charming Janus, double-faced.

Various events had led up to the experience of that evening on which he

had become aware of the acute dent in his self-esteem. One of the great blows to his superiority happened when a man struck his face while he was arguing politely with the driver of a motorcycle which had stalled in front of his car and could not move. The man had called him "silly ass," and from then on he had harboured resentment and feelings of vengeance so deep that he had to laugh at his own speeches in court while pleading for justice over against revenge. He had noticed once that he tipped his hat to a blind person. He also had to laugh at the untrue words spoken to his mistresses: "the act of love is a confession. Selfishness screams aloud, vanity shows off, or else true generosity reveals itself. . . . No man is a hypocrite in his pleasures." (P. 49.) But this laughter at himself was really an echo of what he had heard on the bridge that night, the laughter of awakened conscience, of shame that stings.

All this went back to an experience on the Pont Royal a few years before. Coming from a mistress he passed a woman who was leaning over the railing and by the time he had reached the Boulevard he heard the sound of her body striking the water and a few cries going downstream. He wavered for a few moments and then went on his way. "The next day," he says, "I didn't read the papers." (P. 53.) From then on he could not help looking at his life in a different light, because he had discovered the "basic duplicity of the human being" (p. 63). The cry heard over the Seine persecuted him all over the world. He heard it in the cry of the sea-gulls while making an ocean voyage later on in his life. Watching the water of the sea he was completely disturbed by a little speck which appeared to be nothing else than a bit of debris left behind by the ship. As for the laughter, it became perpetual. He had to suppress it even though it seemed impossible. Life from then on was like living in the "little-ease"—a torture cell used in the Middle Ages, too small to stand up straight or to lie down flat, in which "sleep was a collapse, and waking a squatting" (p. 82)—or in the spitting cell used by the Nazis, a box in which there is just enough room for people to stand while everyone passing by spits on them. This form of scorn by our fellow men is the last judgment taking place every day. Christ was the victim of it. The real reason why Jesus died, Clamence says, is that he could not go on living, for he knew he was guilty, guilty for the murder of the innocents. Therefore he did not defend himself as he knew that "crime consists less in making others die than in not dying oneself" (p. 84). His was a life in revolt. "He cried aloud his agony and that's why I love him, my friend who died without knowing. The unfortunate thing is that he left us alone, to carry on whatever happens, even when we are lodged in the little-ease, knowing in turn what he knew but incapable of doing what he did and of dying like him. . . . Oh, the injustice that has been done him! It wrings my heart." (P. 85.) What organized religion has done today is to hoist Christ onto the judge's bench. Christians and non-Christians alike condemn and "no one is ever acquitted any more" (p. 86).

Clamence himself is guilty of the very same thing. His penitence is misleading. He uses it for the purpose of judging and condemning others. In his effort to silence the laughter of his conscience he sees only one way out, to become an enlightened advocate of slavery, because freedom is too heavy to bear. "It's a chore, quite solitary and very exhausting. . . . The essential thing is to cease being free and to obey, in repentance, a greater rogue than oneself. . . . Death is solitary whereas slavery is collective." (P. 101.) Clamence learned on the bridges of Paris that he was afraid of freedom. "After having solemnly paid my respects to freedom, I decided privately that it had to be handed over without delay to anyone who comes along." (P. 102.) He is again on top of things and in this respect he has not become different. "I haven't changed my way of life; I continue to love myself and to make use of others. Only the confession of my crimes allows me to begin again lighter in heart and to taste a double enjoyment, first of my nature and secondly of a charming repentance." (P. 105.)

The ambiguity of this work of art is intriguing. The novel has been written in the form of a monologue, the most suitable manner to express man's self-centredness and lack of openness in his fallen state. In commenting on this book some have said that it is Camus' confession standing at the brink of the Christian faith.[3] They point to the awakening of conscience and the awareness of guilt. Tillich would call the novel profoundly religious in the sense of expressing ultimate concern. Many terms remind one of the language of the Bible. The full name of the main character is Jean-Baptiste Clamence. Does "Clamence" refer to the "vox clamans in deserto," as he says of himself that he is a "false prophet in the wilderness and refusing to come forth" (p. 108)? Or is it a play on words, reminding us of the French "clemence," meaning "mercy," which he does not possess in great measure. Several times he refers to the doves in the skies, which remain high up and do not seem to be able to descend on anybody except at the end of the story, when they come down and their feathers in the form of snowflakes wrap the streets of the city in a white blanket. The atmosphere of the fall seems gone and a new season has arrived. The language of the final pages is ecstatic; does it express the waiting for revelation? Hardships will be shared in real solidarity, something which Clamence never seemed to be able to accomplish. People will do what someone did while his friend was in prison: sleep on the floor. But the final lines show us that this is still far off. What would happen, Clamence asks, if the young lady would throw herself into the river again? "We'd have to go through with it. Brr. . .! The water's so cold! But let's not worry! It's too late now. It'll always be too late. Fortunately!" (P. 109.)

Others see in this novel mainly a protest against totalitarianism, an attack against modern forms of slavery. The ideas of guilt expressed to them are ironical and all Camus wants to do, they claim, is to show how guilt-

3. Cf. Philip Thody, *Albert Camus, a Study of his Work* (New York, 1957).

feelings lead many to surrender to people worse than themselves. The author, according to this interpretation, is still the unshocked humanist of his earlier works who continues the fight for justice and moderation.

For us it is neither the confession of a person who is "almost" a Christian nor simply a story through which the author wants to warn us against totalitarianism. It is a perfect description in artistic form of man's emancipation. Clamence before the fall is man waking up to his own possibilities, man of the renaissance, confident of himself and certain of his conquests. He is man at home in the world. His self-esteem has not yet been shocked and although he is not outspokenly religious he can fit religion into his life: Clamence looks upon himself as chosen. God is still the conclusion to the argument and is tolerated, as he fits into the picture. This is no longer true after he has wakened up to the awareness of the basic split in his life. Such a god must be thrown overboard since life does not make sense any longer. Then it happens—as Dostoyevsky has said—that if God no longer exists we ourselves become god. Clamence before the fall reminds us of idealist and romantic man still living the life of his dreams, but Clamence after the fall is twentieth-century post-Christian man, disillusioned and alone in this universe. He is the man who has lived through two world wars and daily feels the threat of the cold war, who is afraid of his freedom and apt to switch from autonomy to heteronomy, to domination by others because he is tired of making decisions. The book is undoubtedly a witness to the dangers of totalitarianism and its temptation for modern man, but it is this against the background of a profound analysis of human nature and of man's growing up which suggests a development in Camus' own thought. In *The Stranger* the main character, Meursault, is almost a piece of nature without feeling except for the physical, man as part of the absurd or rather the victim of it. In *The Plague* Dr. Rieux fights against the meaninglessness of life in the form of a disease. The plague has been identified as the Nazi occupation, which is one of the expressions of the absurdity of life, but at the same time it is asserted that the plague is in all of us. In *The Fall* Clamence is involved in life to such an extent that he is guilty of the same things of which he accuses others in the struggle for meaning and values. The picture is much less simple and it is quite probable that it indicates a development in the life and thought of Camus himself at the same time. Man cannot live on the same level as nature, but must fight in order to give meaning to life. He must help his fellow men in solidarity but is unable to do so. When he seems to get close to it he is not pure in his motivation. He remains basically self-centred; he is in constant escape and the more he realizes it the more refined his escape becomes. It is an escape from himself because he cannot face the brokenness of his life. In reality man has a Janus-face even in the most plausible of his pursuits. This is the cause of his utter loneliness, which he tries to cover up, first by means of pretended sincerity and concern which is merely self-concern in disguise, and then, when he wakes up to

the fall, by plain domination of his fellow men. But actually he remains alone, incapable of real solidarity and love, unless. . . .

The worst thing a theologian can possibly do is to state that someone who has given a thorough analysis of human life is almost a Christian. It is not true to the artist's intention, and the theologian both evades his criticism and fails to gain from the artist some of the most valuable insights into his contemporary world. To say that Camus is on the brink of Christianity can close our eyes to his sharp criticism of organized religion. Many a Christian in reading this book should know himself judged for using the Christian religion to cover up the breach in his own life instead of allowing it to be healed. In the Church, too, we can escape ourselves in our efforts to escape God, using religiosity for this purpose. We must take seriously Camus' approach that the acquittal is not heard even within the Church, because we often neglect to make clear the meaning of God's forgiveness. Preaching the Christian religion as a method of self-improvement inevitably leads to a condemnatory attitude.

The danger of temptation is that it comes in a religious form, says Bonhoeffer.[4] The serpent's question directed to Eve did not begin with a flat denial of God; God's existence is presupposed. It almost reads: "Granted that there is a God, don't you think that he would be of a different type from the kind that forbids something, someone more merciful and indulgent?" The real temptation is to get behind the word of God.[5] In giving in to this urge fallen man puts himself in the place of God and becomes man *sicut deus*, like God. "But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil'."[6] Both the Old Testament and the New begin with a temptation story. Temptation is abandonment, not just testing one's strength in the moral sense. Thus the Old Testament begins with the story of Adam who was tempted and fell; the New with the story of Jesus who was tempted and who with the help of God's Word overcame Satan. Adam became like God and died; Christ was the Image of God and brought life and immortality to light.

Comparing these thoughts of Bonhoeffer with what we have read in Camus, we must say that Clamence is the very picture of man "like God, knowing good and evil." The words "tob," good, and "ra," evil, says Bonhoeffer, mean much more than the morally good and bad. They include pleasure and pain, which in this life are inseparable, just as the evil and the good. "Knowing" means more than intellectual knowledge; it means living the split and broken life in which the evil is not without the good and the good is not without the evil; in which pleasure is not without pain and pain not without pleasure. The good in the evil is that it dies and the evil

4. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Temptation* (London, 1956), ch. 1.
5. Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, p. 66.
6. Gen. 3:4f.

in the good is that it dies. The pain in pleasure is that it is short-lived and the pleasure in pain is that it is transitory. Man is divided and Clamence knows it. "Because I longed for eternal life, I went to bed with harlots and drank for nights on end. In the morning, to be sure, my mouth was filled with the bitter taste of mortal state." (P. 77.) Man living between good and evil knows what death is. This is the fate of man who is like God, man in the centre. But his waking up to it does not help him to overcome it. It only makes him look more intensively for a better escape. His conscience may bother him but at the same time it actually helps him to get farther and farther away from God, to be more and more like him, as Clamence felt himself the judge sitting on the throne. "Conscience," says Bonhoeffer, "is not the voice of God to sinful man; it is man's defence against it, but as this defence it points towards it, contrary to our will and knowledge." (P. 83.) By the perpetual laughter Clamence was forced to seek a more secure hiding-place, which caused him to fall all the more deeply. Realization of guilt becomes cause for increase of guilt. Kierkegaard called this the quantitative increase, once sin is presupposed.[7] The story of Clamence is the story of the first Adam. Of Clamence as of Adam we can say: his story is our story. But there is this decisive difference that "for us it begins where it ends for Adam. Our history is history through Christ where Adam's history is history through the serpent. But as those who only live and have a history through Christ, our imagination cannot help us to know about the beginning." (Bonhoeffer, p. 56.) The qualitative leap, Kierkegaard would say, cannot be explained. If we try it, we engage in vain speculation. "We can only know about it from the new middle, from Christ, as those who are freed in faith from the knowledge of good and evil and from death, and who make Adam's picture their own only in faith." (P. 57.)

Man in the centre, fallen man, is man without limit. Man in the image of God knows his limit as a creature, but fallen man denies his limitation. By limit we do not mean the edge or horizon of man's possibilities. Clamence in Paris, as a successful lawyer, does not realize his limit in the sense that there seems no end to his possibilities, just as man of the renaissance was going to conquer nature and subject the world around to himself. Today we are inclined to look on this kind of optimism as a bit naïve. Tillich[8] says of this type of man that essence has been swallowed up by existence. There is no gap between what is and what should be. The world and history for him are the realization of the divine will and can easily be recognized as such. But twentieth-century post-Christian man, when he speaks of limitless existence, thinks of the limit in the centre. The tree of knowledge, standing in the middle of the garden and forming a threat to the tree of life, symbolizes the truth that man's true limit is in the middle of his existence. God is the limit and the middle of life for man made in the image of God. The prohibition came to Adam as grace reminding

7. Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Dread* (Princeton, 1946), ch. IV.
8. Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. II (Chicago, 1957), p. 24.

him of this fact and caused rejoicing and gratitude. He received his life as a creature from the hands of God. But since he has gone behind the word of God and denied his limit he must live and really is not able to, as he is doomed to live from himself. The commandment is now experienced as law instead of grace, and this change makes life hell. Man in the centre has come to be without beginning or end, like the sea in the fog. And he cannot escape his situation. Both Bonhoeffer and Camus have dealt extensively with the problem of suicide. Camus does so in his *Myth of Sisyphus*, which he begins with the words: "There is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide." In this book Camus rejects it as a solution because the absurd must be kept alive even if we do not see meaning it, just as Sisyphus patiently and courageously rolled the stone up the mountain even though he knew that when he reached the top it would tumble down and he would have to start all over. In *The Fall* Camus deals with suicide in an ironical manner, saying that it will not have the effect which it is usually intended to have, namely that of hurting one's friends. People will take off fly-fishing and forget all about it the next day. (P. 56.) For Bonhoeffer suicide evades the commandment to live by a self-chosen death, and "flight into death is flight into the most terrible servitude to life" (p. 55). In his *Ethics*[9] he pleads for a greater understanding of suicidal cases on the part of the Christian Church, on the ground that suicide should be understood as the last effort to give meaning to a meaningless life and an act of solitude whose ultimate decisive motives will always remain hidden. A person can only be kept from it if the commandment to live can be heard again as grace, that he *may* live. This can be known only from the new centre, and remains hidden to the man who himself stands in the middle. This new centre is the Christ who is not man like God, but man in the image of God, not man for whom commanding is breathing, as for Clamence, but the man who comes not to be served but to serve and give his life a ransom for many. The order for Bonhoeffer is: "Sicut deus—Imago Dei—Agnus Dei" and "Agnus Dei" is the "the One who was sacrificed for man sicut deus, killing man's false divinity in true divinity, the God-man who restores the image of God" (p. 72).

Man's limit in the biblical story of the fall is not only indicated by the tree of knowledge and the prohibition, but also by his helper, by Eve. Woman in the story of Genesis is man's limit which has taken on physical form; thus she helps man to bear his free life. Just as in the case of the prohibition, this ordinance works as long as woman is accepted as a token of God's grace. "Free life," says Bonhoeffer, "can only be borne in limitation if it is loved, and out of this mercy he [God] created a companion for man who must be at once the embodiment of Adam's limit and the object of his love" (p. 60). This positive aspect of sexuality is brought out clearly by Karl Barth in his theological anthropology,[10] which stresses

9. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics* (London, 1955), pp. 122ff.
10. Karl Barth, *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, III/2, and III/4 (Zurich, 1951).

that man's being made male and female, in togetherness, is a reflection of God's togetherness within himself as the Three in One, and of his togetherness with his people in the Covenant of Grace. The image of God expresses the freedom for God in the freedom for the other, and because of this Paul can say that marriage is meant to symbolize the mystery of Christ and the Church. If the Bible is so positive about the meaning of the relationship between the sexes, how is it possible that in the Church and in the history of Christian thought so much has been written and said which contradicts this? Is it not true, even today, that for many people original sin is so tied up with sexual intercourse that it causes in an almost biological manner the sinfulness of the child. Kierkegaard warned against the idea by saying that sin is not transferred like cowpox.[11] It is not a matter of affected genes. Such misunderstanding is partly due to the influence of Hellenistic thought, which was basically dualistic.[12] This dualism was worked out in the dual standard of morality as it influenced monastic life. Too much of marriage ethics has been written in the monastery cell. Moralistic naturalism, on the other hand, has swung in the opposite direction under the influence of Sigmund Freud, who considers the sexual drive as practically the root of everything and isolates it from life as a whole.

We must begin by stating that sexuality is not sin. Kierkegaard said that it is only sin once sin is presupposed. But the truth in the association of sexuality with original sin points to something which is often overlooked, namely, the fact that the relationship between the sexes is a kind of test of the relationship with God and our fellow men. This does not mean that every Christian should be married. Christ was unmarried but he was a man in perfect freedom for his fellow men. On the other hand he who denies this limit, his central limit, has lost his freedom for the other person; he turns around himself like a top and is basically solitary. He has only one intention and that is to escape the claims of his fellow men, to be free from him instead of free for him. "There," says Bonhoeffer, "the power of life becomes the power of destruction, power of community becomes the power of isolation, power of love becomes power of hate" (p. 61). His freedom is actually slavery. Clamence is the very expression of man without limit. His mistresses are objects whom he wants to dominate and possess, and with whom he lives in an "I–it" relationship. What he does with his sex-drive expresses what he does in daily life with everyone: treating people like objects, using them to his advantage. "I lived my whole life under a double code, and my most serious acts were often the ones in which I was the least involved." (P. 66.) Sensuality dominated his love-life.

Once sin is presupposed sexuality becomes sensuality. Sensuality is both a form of self-love and an escape from it.[13] "I conceived at least one great

11. Kierkegaard, *Concept of Dread*, p. 35.
12. Cf. Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, Vol. II (London, 1945), pp. 242ff.
13. Reinhold Niebuhr, *Nature and Destiny of Man*, Vol. II, p. 252.

love in my life," Clamence ironically admits, "of which I was always the object" (p. 44). In debauchery one possesses only oneself; therefore it is the pastime of those who are in love with themselves. At the same time Clamence must engage in this kind of life because it helps him to forget—temporarily—the laughter within. He says that sensuality can be compared with a long sleep, with a fog in which the laughter becomes so muffled that he can hardly hear it. But it will always come back. He must admit his dissatisfaction, and he even complains of a shame which stings. "Shame," says Bonhoeffer, "is the expression of the fact that we no longer accept the other person as the gift of God. Shame expresses my passionate desire for the other person and the knowledge that belongs to it that the other person is no longer satisfied just to belong to me but desires something from me. . . . Shame only comes into existence in the world of division." (P. 63.) This insight should determine our marriage-ethics. Too long marriage has been presented in the Church as well as outside, as the legal manner of channelling man's passions as medicine for immorality. Kierkegaard discerned the evil in this view: "It is a great stupidity to suppose that the wedding ceremony of the church, or the husband's fidelity in keeping himself to her alone is enough. Many a marriage has been profaned, and not by an outsider."[14] Clamence's story is not just of interest to a certain type of unmarried men; it is also the story of the married person, of the respectable family father, the story of Adam who was ashamed before Eve. But here we must say: this is not the whole story. The story of Adam ends where the story of Christ begins. "He who commits sin is a slave to sin," but "if the Son shall make you free you will be free indeed."[15] The freedom regained in Christ is the freedom to serve, the freedom of the "doulos Christou." This freedom is no longer hard to bear for his yoke is easy and his burden is light.

We have dealt with two reinterpretations of the fall. The remarkable thing we have noticed is that Bonhoeffer's work which appeared twenty years before that of Camus is almost a theological commentary on it. It shows how well acquainted he was with the spirit of the age. But first we shall look at some of the features which distinguish existentialist interpretations from previous explanations of the doctrine. When we compare them with the Augustinian–Calvinistic ones, with the theory of "posse peccare," "non posse non peccare," and "non posse peccare," we must say that Adam has come back into the human race, to use Kierkegaard's terminology.[16] He is no longer some character back in the past, but thanks both to the results of higher criticism and to the philosophy of involvement he represents the human race. His story is our story. Kierkegaard said: "How sin came into the world every man understands by himself alone."[17] The idea behind this is not that the race begins anew with

14. Kierkegaard, *Concept of Dread*, p. 64
15. John 8:34, 36.
16. Kierkegaard, *Concept of Dread*, ch. I.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 46.

every individual, but that every individual begins afresh with the race. Barth has expressed it in this way: "Man is at once an individual and only an individual, and, at the same time, without in any way losing his individuality, he is responsible representative of all men."[18] Thus the story of Adam is not the story of a golden age preceding the history of mankind.[19] "We must remember," says Bonhoeffer, "that this is not the tale of some original man that leaves us more or less involved. If this were so our task would be to let our imagination play in order to remove ourselves into the fairyland beyond tob and ra." (P. 56.) We must translate "the old picture-language of the world of magic into the new picture-language of the technical world. We must always assume that in either case it is we who are aimed at and we must readily and openly allow what is said in that age about the man of the magical world-picture to apply to us." (P. 49.)

Another striking feature of existentialist reinterpretations is that the question of the "why" and "how" of the origin of evil is admitted to be insoluble. The theological interpretation of Bonhoeffer begins with the facts as experienced and looks at them in the light of the victory of the second Adam. "The question of why evil exists," he says, "is not a theological question, for it assumes that it is possible to go behind the existence forced upon us as sinners. We would make something else responsible. Therefore, 'the question of why' can always be answered with 'that,' which burdens man completely. The theological question does not arise about the origin of evil but about the real overcoming of evil on the cross; it asks for the forgiveness of guilt, for the reconciliation of the fallen world." (P. 78.) In other words the fall can only be seen in the light of the acquittal which Camus had never heard.

Pascal had said this long before: "We cannot conceive the glorious state of Adam, nor the nature of his sin, nor the transmission of it to us. . . . All we need know is that we are miserable, corrupt, separate from God, but ransomed by Jesus Christ."[20] The representation of the human race in Adam is looked upon in the light of the original representation of the human race in Jesus Christ. The reality of the victory is what really counts and this enables us with Kierkegaard to admit that all good explanations are not really full explanations but only explanations up to the inexplicable point, namely, the qualitative leap. Original sin remains a mystery without which man cannot be understood. Pascal said: "This foolishness is wiser than all the wisdom of men. . . . For without this we cannot say what man is. . . ."[21] In the same manner Bonhoeffer describes the series of events leading up to the fall, like the prohibition, the creation of Eve, man's

18. Karl Barth, *Christ and Adam, Man and Humanity in Romans 5* (Edinburgh, 1956), p. 43.
19. Emil Brunner, *Man in Revolt* (London, 1947), ch. v.
20. Blaise Pascal, *Pensées* (ed. Léon Brunschvicg, Paris: Nelson, n.d.), no. 560 (p. 280f.).
21. *Ibid.*, no. 445 (p. 234f.).

learning to distinguish between his freedom and his creatureliness. But all these do not explain the simple words, "and he ate." The act itself is inconceivable and has no excuse. It is a deed of mankind from which no man can absolve himself. It is revolt against the only possible attitude which befits a creature. It is defection in which all creation is torn away from the centre. (Bonhoeffer, p. 73.)

Paul Tillich has called existentialism the good luck of twentieth-century theology.[22] He means that it gives a description of the human predicament which comes much closer to the classical Christian interpretation than the rationalist and idealist anthropologies. We can see what he has in mind when we compare Clamence as he was before with what he was after his fall. It is very hard to talk with people like Clamence before he "fell." The lack of awareness of the gap in life makes it almost impossible even to raise the question of gospel. Jesus had the hardest time with the Pharisees. He came for those who are in need of the physician, and Clamence after the fall knows that something is wrong. He is more like the publican with whom Jesus could talk. On the other hand we go too far in saying that he is on the doorstep of Christianity. Part of Camus' purpose is to show how relatively successful Clamence is in escaping the gnawing pains of the sickness unto death.

We should perhaps remember that Amsterdam as Camus saw it is not the whole picture either. There, in the middle of the city, in the heart of fallen life, also surrounded by the circles of hell, stands the "Oude Kerk." At one time the authorities thought of demolishing it because of the bad condition of the building. But some people worked to get it repaired and finally both building and congregation were restored. Today it is standing there as a monument and reminder of the fact that the only thing a Christian can do is to stand in solidarity with fallen man. He too knows of life between good and evil, between pleasure and pain. He is part of the first creation and in Adam he recognizes himself. But at the same time he knows something else, and therefore he looks at the old creation in a different manner. By the grace of God he can identify himself with Clamence because he has learned to identify himself with Christ. He looks at the dawn of the fall in the light of Easter morning. He has heard the acquittal and may express in his life what Paul said: "The free gift is not like the trespass. . . . If because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, *much more* will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ."[23]

What is the right method of apologetics? Bonhoeffer felt that twentieth-century post-Christian man is closer to the Christian faith not in spite of but because of the fact that he is irreligious.[24] He is more like the "people

22. Cf. Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture* (New York, 1959), ch. VII, VIII.
23. Romans 5:15, 17.
24. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison* (London, 1956), pp. 147ff.

of the land" in Jesus' days because he has no religious pretensions. The spirit of the gospel is congenial with this honesty, whereas religious pretensions are the hardest barrier to break through. We have tended to confuse religion or Christianity with Christian faith as the answer to God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ. We know the results which this confusion has had in the missionary enterprise. If it is a self-assured Christianity we bring, we might as well stay away from the heathen. Just as there is no mission, so there is no apologetics without apology, without making it clear that we bring the Christ in earthen vessels, that the word of God both judges and redeems also our own lives. The pagans—including the modern pagans in our environment—are quick to discover Janus-faces. And if we are convinced that the right response to God is not religiosity but faith we are led to a greater emphasis on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit who alone is able to overcome the real offence of the gospel. In the final analysis not our words but our lives will be the decisive witness. Lives lived in obedience are the best "worldly" interpretations of the Good News by which the Spirit of God rouses a sense of the "above" and the "beyond" in twentieth-century post-Christian man.