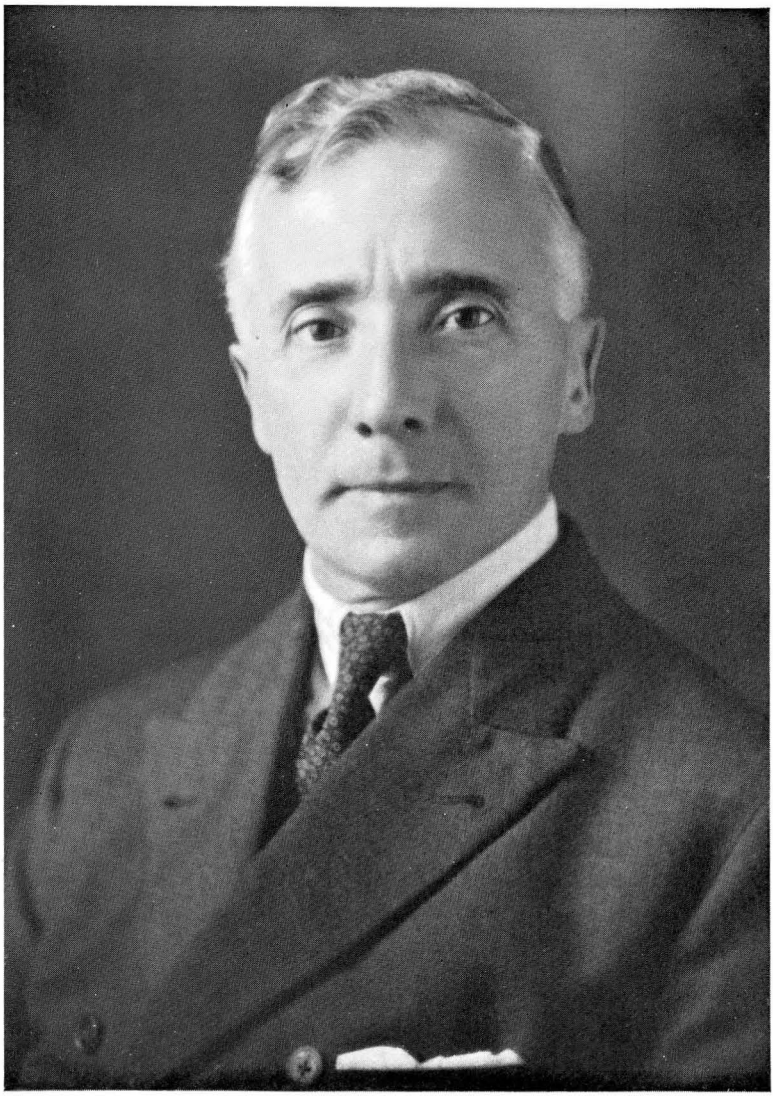
RIVALS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH



LAURANCE HENRY MARSHALL
1882—1953

RIVALS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

W. T. Whitley Lectures for 1952

BY

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With a memoir of the author by

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A MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR

LAURANCE HENRY MARSHALL

1882–1953

To know Laurance Marshall was to trust and love him. The better you knew him, the more you trusted both his character and judgment, and your heart went out to him in ever-deepening affection. Endowed with great natural gifts, he cultivated them assiduously and intelligently, as a wise gardener plans and develops his ground. The result was a life of ordered beauty and disciplined distinction. Fifty years ago I went to reside in his home town of Louth. One of the first men I met said: 'You must get to know Laurance Marshall, he will help you'. This prophecy, progressively fulfilled during a friendship that endured for half a century, might well have been expanded to embrace many people who are grateful for his enriching friendship and ministry. Testimonies to his helpfulness have reached me from his students and colleagues, and I am specially indebted to the Revs. J. O. Barrett, A. H. Bonser, W. E. Hough and J. C. Whitney for comments incorporated in this chapter; and to Mrs. L. H. Marshall and Miss Stella Marshall for information and personal memories, some of which are too sacred to be printed.

Laurance Henry Marshall was born in Louth, Lincolnshire, on 8th March 1882. He was the third son born to parents of sterling character and genuine piety, who created a home where God was honoured and love found expression in wise, but never irksome, discipline. Sundays were made the high day of the week, with fascinating games improvised from Bible stories. His father was a master coachbuilder—a clever craftsman, but lacking the business acumen necessary to cope successfully with the difficulties of the transitional period between the brougham

and the motor car. While conscientious in all commercial engagements, his chief interest was in biblical exposition, and few lay preachers have made better use of a Concordance. For many years he had the care of three village churches, which benefited greatly from his pastoral care and teaching. When death released him from a long and painful illness, one of the elder sons wrote: 'Father has left little material wealth . . . but what a legacy of pure and stainless character!' His mother was a lady of innate refinement, devout spirit and inquiring mind, who knew the way to the heart of a child and opened the treasures of literature for her family. Walking with dignity amid the simplicities of life, she adorned commonplace tasks by the grace with which she performed them. In this congenial atmosphere Laurance lisped the accents of the Christian life almost from his cradle and gave early promise of exceptional qualities of heart and mind. His ability was recognized at the first school he attended and he was given prominent parts in the annual concerts held in the Town Hall. Reporting the concert given in 1890, when he was eight years of age, the local paper stated: 'The palm of the evening must go to Laurance Marshall for the excellent recitations he gave us'. A more ambitious part was taken the following year, which called forth the comment: 'Mention must be made of the clear and distinct voice of the Herald of the Seasons, Laurance Marshall, and the beautiful way this was done'. At the age of eleven he became a pupil at Louth Grammar School, where he soon took a prominent place among the prizewinners. He was baptized by the Rev. E. Hall Jackson, a scholarly preacher and gifted hymn-writer, and at once became an enthusiastic leader of youth work in the Northgate Church. His fame spread rapidly and he was soon in great demand as a speaker throughout the district. Friends still retain vivid memories of his first sermon at the Northgate Church and of a forceful address, delivered at a Christian Endeavour County Convention, on the words, 'Launch out into the deep.' He was attracted to the teaching profession, and in his sixteenth year became a pupil teacher at the Welhouse

School, Grimsby. At this period the habits of a lifetime were formed and he overcame all difficulties by rigid self-discipline; a corner of the dining-room was converted into a study and he adhered faithfully to an exacting time-table, as he worked for the intermediate arts examination of London University and sought to prepare himself for a course in a Teachers' Training College. In spite of this rigid programme, he found time to teach a group of children and to conduct a weekly class for boys in his own home, when serious study was undertaken and the pupils were tested by periodic examinations.

All who had the privilege of hearing Principal Marshall give a 'Charge to the Minister', would realize that his own call to the ministry had been vivid and unmistakable. He had actually completed his application for admission to Borough Road Teachers' Training College when the challenge came. Always reticent about the details, he was emphatic concerning its reality. Once he revealed that the room seemed to be illumined and a distinct voice bade him dedicate his life to the service of Christ and His Church. He added: 'If I prove to be an utter failure in the ministry, I can never forget the light and leading of that night.' He gave us a further glimpse of that experience at his Recognition Service in Liverpool, when he said: 'I can give the day and the hour of my decision to enter the ministry—it was about 9 p.m. on Sunday evening, 11th October 1903. The light that was lit for me that night is a light that will never go out. When my barque has been so tossed upon the seas of criticism and spiritual conflict that I have even wondered if ever I should reach the port—I have always found comfort, and courage to persevere, through the calm and steady shining of the light of that experience.' His course was now set, but he deemed it wise to continue to teach until he had completed the arts degree, and he accepted an appointment as Form Master in the Leeds Modern School. In the northern city he came under the influence of the Rev. R. C. Lemin, who persuaded him to make immediate application to Rawdon College, which he entered as a student in 1905.

The four years spent at Rawdon were happy and profitable. In spite of a deplorable deficiency in athletics, he had the sportsman's outlook on life which made him popular with the students; and his mental capacity consoled the tutors for their unrewarded efforts on behalf of less gifted pupils. During those four sessions he graduated in arts and divinity at London University, and crowned a brilliant course by gaining the Dr. Williams and Baptist Union Scholarships. It would be wrong to conclude that these academic distinctions were gained at the cost of social relationships, for Laurance Marshall knew how to relax and was the life and soul of student gatherings. A clever raconteur, his gift of mimicry amounted almost to genius. How we rocked with laughter when he impersonated a pompous platform orator or gave a life-like picture of a tutor's idiosyncrasies! How breathlessly we listened as he portrayed Shakespeare's Brutus! Though he always had an excuse for absence from the football field, he could out-walk many a trained athlete. It was a great experience to walk and talk with him in the Yorkshire dales or the Thuringian forest, for he had the power to interpret nature, the ability to impart knowledge and the brotherly kindness that warmed a comrade's heart.

The scholarships gained at Rawdon made it possible for Laurance Marshall to spend two profitable years in Germany, doing post-graduate work under Professors Harnack and Deissmann in Berlin, and Professors Jülicher and Heitmüller in Marburg, and he acquired the liveliest respect for German *Kultur*. It was my privilege to spend some time with him in the *Vaterland*, and I shall never forget his obvious admiration when listening to Harnack or the tributes he paid to Deissmann as an interpreter of the New Testament. I recall an amusing incident in an hotel at Eisenach after we had settled in pastorates. We had innocently registered as 'Ministers', forgetting that the Germans reserved that description for politicians, and were amazed that so much attention was bestowed upon a couple of young Baptist ministers. Enlightenment came with the bill, whereon we were designated

as 'Right Honourables'. We accepted the titles with becoming humility, but with the fear that the gratuities we were able to bestow upon the hotel staff would scarcely enhance the reputation of the British Cabinet.

Laurance Marshall entered upon his first pastorate in 1911, at Princes Gate, Liverpool, with the declaration: 'I venture, with mingling hope and fear, to take upon my lips those daring words of the apostle: "I will most gladly spend, and be spent out, for your souls." ' This was no idle boast, for as pastor, preacher or teacher, in the varied spheres he occupied through life, he gave himself without stint to his people and students. The Liverpool pastorate was marked by a most unpleasant experience. In the summer of 1914, accompanied by two boys from the congregation, he set out for a holiday in Germany, where he was arrested as a suspected spy at the outbreak of war and saw the inside of seven German prisons before he was permitted to return to England at the close of the year. Like the apostle, he made this distasteful happening work out unto 'the furtherance of the Gospel'. In a vivid narrative entitled, *My August Holiday*, he recalled that they were first incarcerated in a town dungeon—'a semi-basement with thick walls and a small window. It was in a filthy condition, and the smell was foul. The dungeon had previously been occupied by some Russian Poles who had gone to Germany for the harvest. These people were turned out, some disinfectant was sprinkled upon the floor, and we were locked in. We were told that we should have to remain there only two hours, but we were actually there twenty-four. The weariness of waiting hour after hour under these disgusting conditions we shall never forget.' The other prisons were somewhat better. He gives this description of his fellow-prisoners in the seventh and last gaol: 'We were indeed a motley crowd. . . . Every type was represented—there were the well-to-do and the poorest of the poor, the dandy and the tramp, the educated and the ignorant, those with polished manners and those with absolutely no manners at all. Still we all got on wonderfully well together. . . .

Those who received little delicacies shared their good fortune most lavishly with those who had no friends to bring them anything . . . (gifts) were simply forced on me by men of various nationalities who were entire strangers to me.' Henceforth he could say: 'Nothing human is foreign to me.'

The year 1916 was notable in Laurance Marshall's life, for in April he was married to Miss Clare Illingworth, of Bradford, and entered again into the joy and peace of home life, which he had sorely missed since leaving the parental roof eleven years earlier. Thus began a happy fellowship, enriched by the birth of their only child—Ruth Jean—in December 1921.

In 1920 Laurance Marshall left Liverpool for Coventry to commence a ministry at Queen's Road notable for scholarly preaching and for the personal interest he took in youth work—especially scouting. It was a congenial sphere, but he could not resist the challenge to a more specifically teaching ministry when invited to accept the Chair of Practical Theology in McMaster University, Toronto. During the five years spent in Canada (1925–1930) he exerted a remarkable influence upon religious thought throughout Ontario and Quebec in spite of vexatious opposition and slanderous criticism. In response to a call from Victoria Road Church, Leicester, he returned to England in 1930. It was a difficult period for Christian work, but Marshall resolutely declined to compromise with the spirit of the age and fully maintained the traditions of the church. Once again he felt compelled to relinquish the pastorate for tutorial work when invited to return to Rawdon as Professor of New Testament Interpretation and Pastoral Theology in 1936. This was an ideal appointment—work dear to his heart, for which he had unique qualifications, in his beloved *alma mater* and among Yorkshire folk who prefer truth seeking to heresy hunting. He received a most cordial welcome home from Baptists in the north of England, where his outstanding preaching gifts were immediately appreciated by the churches and his ability for leadership was recognized by his election to the Presidency of the Yorkshire

Association in 1946. The publication of his book, *The Challenge of New Testament Ethics*, came to his friends like a personal portrait. Previous contributions from his pen, especially his essay in *Studies in History and Religion*, had made them familiar with his lucid literary style, but here was a volume that gave more than mature thought and graceful diction—it revealed the author, and those who knew him best seemed not only to hear the voice but even to see the expressive face of their loved teacher. 'I can never pick up his book', said a colleague, 'without immediately recalling the living man.' One reviewer aptly described it as the work of 'a scholar who is also a preacher and a prophet'.

It was inevitable that Professor Marshall should succeed to the Principalship on the lamented death of Dr. A. C. Underwood in 1948. All Rawdonians rejoiced when their new Principal gained the Ph.D. degree of London University and they hoped he might long be spared to lend distinction to the College. The news of his breakdown created widespread sorrow, and his translation, on 22nd January 1953, came as a personal bereavement to a wide circle of friends.

There is abundant material here for a full-length biography of a life rich in gifts, experience, achievement and friendship, but space permits nothing more than a few rapid sketches of outstanding qualities.

The Teacher

It is not every scholar who can teach. The best scholar is sometimes the worst teacher, for he does not know how hard it is for others to learn. Dr. Marshall was saved from this limitation by his innate patience and sympathy, and by his determination 'to keep the young generations in hail'. Like William Medley, he was 'a lamplighter on the high road of knowledge,' and never turned fellow-students from his study door when they came for illumination on the dark problems which baffle the minds of most freshmen. When he returned to the College as Tutor the

students declared that he turned drudgery into delight by his unique method of teaching New Testament Greek.

Four qualities are essential for really great teaching: knowledge, enthusiasm, patience and clarity; and Dr. Marshall possessed them all in rich measure. He was a painstaking student, never content until he had mastered the subject on which he was working, ever seeking equipment for the worthy discharge of his chosen vocation in order that he might become 'a workman with nothing to be ashamed of, and who knows how to use the word of truth to the best advantage.' This sound scholarship gave authority to all his utterances and won the respect of his students.

His enthusiasm for the New Testament knew no bounds: it was a storehouse of inexhaustible treasures. One of his students writes: 'As he opened the pages of the New Testament he was like a master jeweller sorting precious stones. Each one had value and was to be looked at carefully through a magnifying glass for hidden beauty . . . almost every verse was a gem when seen by such eyes, and his ability to make its beauty seen by other, dimmer, eyes has enriched this book for all who read it with him.' Another old student gives this testimony: 'He would trace a derivation through the somewhat tortuous paths of the Greek classics, until he ultimately arrived at the specifically New Testament sense; a sense which lit up the whole passage . . . with an entirely new light. . . . He once gave me a series of private tutorials . . . and waxed so enthusiastic over a passage . . . that he thumped the chair in which he was sitting as if he had been addressing a large congregation. Afterwards, of course, just as characteristically, he apologized. There must be many men whose love for the New Testament was inspired by his enthusiasm.'

Patience has been called the beggar's virtue, but it is also a teacher's necessity. Dr. Marshall had sufficient of this quality to linger with dull plodders, while he also had enough wisdom to decline to waste time or energy over those who were too

idle to stir up the gift that was in them—the dilettanti required other treatment which he knew how to administer. A heavy burden of responsibility lay on him during the closing years at Rawdon when administrative cares were added to an excessive programme of lectures, but he was always willing—even eager —to give special coaching to students preparing for important examinations. More than one minister owes his degree, if not his soul, to this sacrificial Christian extra.

Dr. Marshall could certainly have given an affirmative answer to Dr. Alexander Whyte's question, 'Can you clarify your thought?' He would also have endorsed the truth which a Cambridge philosopher is said to have expressed by a subtle adaptation of Paul's famous sentence—'Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels . . . though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries . . . and have not *clarity*, I am nothing.' He took infinite pains to express his thought in language easy to understand and interesting to follow; was never afraid to repeat ideas in other words; and was adept in enforcing his points by apposite illustrations. When a student failed to grasp his meaning he was wont to say, 'I am afraid I haven't made this as clear as I thought'—a comment which revealed at once the value he placed on lucidity and the generosity of his self-judgments.

The Preacher

In the classroom Dr. Marshall could always see a pulpit. Though he endeavoured to train his students in habits of exact scholarship, he never forgot that they were called to proclaim the Gospel. Consequently his teaching work was never purely academic, but was marked by a persistent homiletic strain. He was pre-eminently a preacher with a message. By every device of oratory he emphasized the claims of God on human obedience as these are revealed in the life and teaching of Jesus. He refused to heed the demand for shorter sermons and seldom preached

for less than thirty minutes—generally much longer. Such was his conception of the preacher's office that he resented commands concerning the subject of a sermon or the conduct of a service from any save the Highest. It is reported—I hope erroneously—that just before a service a distinguished University don who was present in the vestry expressed disapproval of lessons from the Old Testament, whereupon Dr. Marshall altered his prepared Order of Service to include sentences and a lesson from the Psalms. A powerful ethical note ran through the whole of his public utterances. Though a New Testament scholar, he often seemed to resemble an Old Testament prophet with his flashing eye, vigorous denunciation of sin, and challenging demands for upright conduct. Here is a sample of his forthright fearless utterances:

> I yield to nobody in my appreciation of the loyal and enlightened service rendered to the Churches by the majority of deacons, but there are some deacons who apparently suppose that their chief function is to resist all change. I once observed a man's demeanour when someone was suggesting a very necessary change in Church routine. Every second that passed his face grew harder and grimmer, then an ominous glint appeared in his eyes, and finally, like a pistol-shot, came his comment: 'We never change anything here.' Such a man is a tragic figure—a static man in a dynamic and rapidly changing world, a man whose chief contribution to the work of God at the present time is to lay the ice-cold hand of the dead past with paralysing effect on every attempt to meet the new needs of the new age.

The Truth Seeker

Dr. Marshall saw Jesus Christ as The Truth, and any trifling with truth appeared to him as an indecency. At a dinner given in his honour he declared: 'To be afraid of truth is to be uncertain of God. All truth is God's truth, and you cannot help the cause of religion by falsehood in any form.' In Canada he was afforded a

great opportunity to champion truth against a confederacy of prejudice, suspicion, misrepresentation and obscurantism. As soon as his appointment to McMaster was announced it was whispered that the new Professor was a modernist and the bugle sounded for a heresy hunt. He reached Canada just in time to attend the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec, held at Hamilton, 16th–22nd October 1925, and to deliver an address on Religious Education which created a most favourable impression on all unprejudiced minds. His critics had to fall back on the precarious argument from silence and complained that he did not mention sin or the fact that the precious blood of Christ was sacrificed for us. At the Education Session, two days later, the wisdom of his appointment was challenged and an acrimonious debate lasted for eight hours. When invited to speak, Professor Marshall made a striking declaration of his personal faith, offered a spirited vindication of his theological beliefs and severely castigated those who had cast suspicion upon his honour without a scrap of reliable evidence. He concluded his speech with these words:

> The issue is a very simple one. Is your University at McMaster to be a great seat of learning, where men and women can gain the necessary knowledge for their equipment in life, and at the same time training in sound evangelical Christianity? Or is it to be a stronghold of bigotry and fanaticism and obscurantism? The issue is in your hands.

The tense debate continued until midnight when, by a majority of 399 to 159, the delegates expressed their approval of the action taken by the Senate and Board of Governors in appointing Professor Marshall to the Chair of Practical Theology. The battle was next carried into the constituency and for twelve months the Professor was continuously assailed. Matters came to a head at the 1926 Convention held in Toronto. The critics came with a prepared plan of campaign: a specious amendment was moved to the Annual Report to the effect that, despite Professor Marshall's qualities as a man and his ability as a teacher, his continuance as a

Professor at McMaster was not in the best interests of the Convention. The discussion ranged from the historicity of the Book of Jonah, via the inerrancy of the Bible, to the doctrine of total depravity; students' distorted tales, ministers' suspicions and press innuendoes were brought as evidence. The Official Stenographic Report suggests the atmosphere of a prize-fight rather than a religious assembly and *The Toronto Star Weekly* headed its graphic report: 'Professor Upper-cuts with Fighting Words.' When Professor Marshall rose to speak, late in the evening, the atmosphere was vibrant with excitement, but he was calm and ominously polite. As he rebutted the charges and exposed the motives of his opponents he gradually became ablaze with righteous indignation, though the fire was always under control. An experienced reporter, Mr. F. Griffin, wrote:

> Only once in my newspaper career did I hear a speech that in my opinion can in any sense of the word compare with that flaming, magnificent speech of Professor Marshall's. . . . It had everything: emotion, restraint, wit, fire, culture, the rapidity of striking lightning, the thrust of a flashing rapier, sincerity, power, the heart throbs of refined sentiment, the rumble of thundering guns. . . . He did not mince a syllable, he used 'lie' when he meant lie and said 'coward' when he meant coward, but he never used abuse, never descended to vilification. He fought as men fought in the days of the Crusades; with the grace with which they duelled in the days of the *Grand Siècle*.

When a vote was taken Professor Marshall was confirmed in his appointment by a majority of 708 to 258; and a further vote censured his chief opponent and requested an apology as alternative to disqualification. The defeated opposition left the building singing—with characteristic inappropriateness—'Blest be the tie that binds,' while Professor Marshall stood calm and triumphant, like one of King Arthur's knights in the hour of victory. His exultation was not simply that he had defeated an attack upon his honour, but was due rather to the fact that he had successfully vindicated the truth, which he was ever ready to follow in scorn

of consequences. He agreed with Milton that truth needs no policies, no stratagems, to make her victorious.

Though always prepared to step into the breach when truth was assailed, Professor Marshall had no desire for conflict. He preferred the study to the arena, but when confronted by insincerity he rose in righteous indignation and used all the weapons in his well-stocked armoury. In the course of a lecture on Pastoral Theology he spoke of a regular member of a weekly prayer meeting who always prayed for the 'dear little boys and girls in the Sunday school, but, whena sked by a harassed Sunday school superintendent to take a class while the regular teacher was on holiday, excused himself on the ground that "he liked to rest on Sunday afternoons." ' After a significant pause, the lecturer added: 'A hypocrite, gentlemen, who would not so much as lift a little finger (here he lifted his hand with the little finger outstretched) to help the "dear little boys and girls in the Sunday School." ' The contempt with which he dismissed unscrupulous critics and dissemblers gave him pain rather than satisfaction, it was the inevitable expression of his loyalty to truth. Few men of ability had less personal ambition, and he was satisfied to serve and allow others to have the world's applause. He disliked committees and seldom, if ever, attended the Baptist Union Council; but he was loyal to the denomination and his friends—

> True as a dial to the sun,
> Although it be not shined upon.

The Christian

'I believe that on all the great questions of morality and religion the absolute and final word is with Jesus Christ our God and Saviour.' In these words Dr. Marshall expressed his faith in Christ and his conviction that there is an inevitable connection between religion and morality. 'No man', he declared, 'can fairly stand for sound doctrine when his ethics are rotten.' He loathed frothy

expression of opinions that did not lead to action; the pious platitudes of hypocrites roused his indignation; and he had nothing but scorn for those who neglected Christian duty for the indulgence of devotional basking in the sunshine. To him, Christianity was not simply a creed: it was a way of life and service which he walked with growing confidence and ever-deepening faith. His life was a unity because every part of it was rooted and grounded in Christ—whether in the study or in the home circle or amid the flowers of his beautiful Rawdon garden, he was conscious of the same Presence. The Jesus of history and the Christ of experience were one and the same Lord. This explains his purity of thought, motive and action. He shrank from evil because his heart was pure, he spent himself in doing good because the love of Christ constrained him. Aristotle would have called him high-souled. We think of him as a Christian gentleman who fought a good fight, finished his course and gained the crown. Unconsciously he painted his own character in describing Paul's idea of a good man:

> He is one who is a great active lover of mankind, who cherishes the joyful conviction that goodness is always infinitely worth while, who displays the serenity of mind and heart that comes from a clear conscience; who . . . is rich in goodwill; who can be absolutely relied upon in word and deed, in fair weather or in foul; who is considerate of the feelings and interests of others . . . who has himself completely under control; one who occupies his mind with the things that are straightforward, worthy of honour, right, undefiled, high-toned, in short, with all that appertains to moral excellence and all that is deserving of praise.

That was the mark towards which he pressed from the days of youth. It was clearly expressed in a letter he wrote to me just before we entered Rawdon together in 1905:

> I am not going to wish ease and cloudless sky and so on, but rather life-long strife and conflict; but strife and conflict crowned with victory—the only true victory in the world—His 'Well

Done.' This is all I wish for myself, and seems to me to be the highest; and it is the highest—not the easiest—that I wish for you. May God grant that we may be a help to each other.

That youthful ideal has been realized—

The strife is o'er, the battle done;
The victory of life is won;
The song of triumph has begun,
Hallelujah!

HENRY BONSER

I

THE STARTING POINT

ἑαυτὸν γάρ τις ἐὰν γνώῃ θεὸν εἴσεται·
θεὸν δὲ εἰδὼς ἐξομοιωθήσεται θεῷ

Clement of Alexandria, *Pedagogus*, Book III, ch. 1.

(*a*) The Fact of the Transcendent Constraint

A few years ago, under the title *Invitation to Pilgrimage*, Dr. John Baillie published a book which deserves to be regarded as one of the important theological pronouncements of recent years. The book is brief, but it is none the worse for that—in fact prolixity is the bane of much modern theology. Again, it is fairly simple, within the reach of any decently educated person who is prepared to devote attention to the subject; and perhaps a really sound theology is always fairly simple, so that when a theologian becomes abstruse he is for the most part indulging in mental gymnastics rather than dealing with the exposition of his faith. Further, it is interesting, and that is more than can be said of a great deal that goes under the name of theology—a really live theology is inevitably interesting. And once more, it is addressed not so much to believers as to unbelievers, and it thus seeks to perform one of the main functions of theology, namely, to commend the Christian faith to outsiders, who are rather contemptuous of it, or at least indifferent to it, and by intellectual means to compel them at least to acknowledge that it is worthy of their consideration. It is just at this point that some modern theologians fail hopelessly. They have nothing to say except to believers. They just throw a dogmatic brick at the head of the unbeliever and tell him that if he cannot accept that, there is nothing more to be said. When the unbeliever protests that he

has doubts and difficulties, they simply tell him that all doubt is nothing but sin, and that all religious difficulties are simply the perverse creations of a reason hopelessly corrupted by the Fall. That type of argumentation is both inadequate and unfair. It is certainly not Dr. Baillie's method. He seeks to show the relevance of the Christian message to every man, and finds the point of contact for it in normal human experience; and it is solely with that point of contact that we are now concerned. His primary thesis is that every man who really knows himself is aware of a transcendent constraint, of being under authority.

Such, needless to say, is the biblical view of man. The Old Testament regards man as a being who is under an absolute obligation to do the will of God. As Eichrodt has pointed out, the 'Thou shalt' of the Law 'originates not in civil life, but in the cultic ritual of the people, that is, the place where the voice of the divine Lord of the Covenant is heard in the man commissioned by him, summoning his people to respond.'[1] This view of man finds its most powerful expression in the prophets with their watch-cry, 'Not sacrifice, but obedience.' But it is not absent even from the Wisdom Literature, which, though many of its maxims are purely prudential, insists that the beginning of wisdom is reverence for God. All the way through the Old Testament, man is regarded 'as a responsibly acting "I" ' whose supreme duty it is to respond 'to the call of the divine "Thou" ' by action.[2] This conception of man is, of course, still more obvious in the New Testament. The attitude of Jesus is well summed up in a statement attributed to Him in one of the papyri: 'The Kingdom of God is within you, and whoever knows himself will find it.'[3] St. Paul, too, held that every man, Gentile as well as Jew, was aware, in his inmost being, of a sense of absolute moral obligation.[4] The biblical viewpoint can be summed up in

[1] *Man in the Old Testament*, p. 15.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 24.
[3] *P. Oxy.* IV, p. 654, quoted by Moulton and Milligan in *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, s.v.
[4] Romans ii. 14.

the words of Clement of Alexandria: 'Whoever knows himself will know God, and knowing God will grow like God.' [1]

What is this transcendent constraint of which every man who knows himself is aware? It is, broadly speaking, a constraint to be true and not false, kind and not cruel, generous and not selfish, considerate of others and not self-centred and self-absorbed, pure and not licentious, brave and not cowardly. 'What is the source of this strange demand, of this moral constraint which is so like the demand that a good man may make upon us, and yet is still there even if there is no good man to voice it? It is possible to lose sight of this great question in a tangle of psychological and epistemological sophistication, but when all is said and done the question comes back upon us and requires to be answered. . . . This experience, which is both a universal experience and an intimate individual experience, stands up and makes sense if there is a holy God, a personal God, in Whom we live and move and have our being. Does it stand up and make sense otherwise?' [2] This constraint does not come from ourselves. And whatever part our parents may play in awakening our awareness of it, it does not originate from them, for they are under that same constraint themselves. Nor is its source and spring to be found in Society.* The only adequate explanation is that it comes from God—and there is, as Lyman points out, one aspect of the life of God which every man can know, for he can know God as Cosmic Moral Will—what Matthew Arnold called 'an enduring Power not ourselves making for righteousness.' Thus when initially we believe in God we are not exercising what William James called 'the will to believe', but are simply responding to a transcendent constraint from which we cannot escape. Even primitive man, however deficient his ideas of right and wrong, and however defective his conception of the Divine, is aware of things which he ought to do and things which he ought not to do out of

[1] See p. 1.
[2] Alec Vidler, *Christian Belief*, pp. 20 f.
* These points are discussed below, pp. 19 ff.

deference to a Power beyond himself and beyond the society of which he is a member, a Power conceived to be what Otto called 'numinous'.

In this awareness of a transcendent constraint, in however dim and confused a way, every man encounters God. As Dr. Baillie affirms: 'At the foundation of the whole spiritual life of man there liest he knowledge of a transcendent claim that is made upon him. We have all heard this knocking at the door. We have been hearing it all our lives through. . . . It stirs us at the very core of our being, and somewhere deep down in our hearts we all have some understanding of what it means.' Our first knowledge of God, however much it is enriched later on, comes to us through a transcendent constraint which is essentially ethical in content, and is a vital and indispensable factor in the spiritual life.

The sense of moral obligation has been rightly described as 'the most illuminating fact of human nature.' As Canon Alan Richardson remarks: 'The sense of obligation to do that which is believed to be right is in fact the pressure of God upon every human life. God is made known to all men, even though they have not learned to call Him God, as moral demand.' [1] Thus the sense of moral obligation suggests that we are living not in a morally indifferent universe but in a world ruled by a Personal Moral Will. 'In an indifferent world, the idea of obligation is a footless myth.' [2] Or as A. E. Taylor says: 'Serious living is no more compatible with the belief that the universe is indifferent to morality than serious and arduous pursuit of truth with the belief that truth is a human convention or superstition.' [3] So far, then, as a man is aware of this transcendent constraint and yields himself to it, he can say with H. G. Wells: 'I have come under a divine imperative, I am obeying an irresistible call, I am a humble and willing servant of the righteousness of God.' [4] Hence we maintain that the sense of moral obligation, of transcendent

[1] *Christian Apologetics*, p. 125.
[2] W. E. Hocking, *Types of Philosophy*, p. 321.
[3] *The Faith of a Moralist*, Vol. I., p. 61.
[4] *God the Invisible King*, p. 100 f.

constraint, is a 'divine imperative', evidence of the pressure of the spirit of the Living God upon our lives.

(*b*) The Inadequacy of all Ethical Theories which Ignore the Transcendent Constraint

In support of this thesis, we must now seek to show that all ethical theories which leave out of account this sense of transcendent constraint are inadequate, and not true to the facts of experience. This, of course, does not mean that ethics *per se* implies religion or that a man cannot behave rightly unless he is —consciously or unconsciously—religious. The real issue at stake is the motive behind the ethical life, and there are apparently many motives which prompt ethical behaviour. A man may have no faith in God, and may be convinced that the Universe is simply a soulless brute thing that will shortly blot him clean out of existence, and yet even then decide that in order to make his brief life tolerable for himself and those around him, it is advisable to live a morally decent life. But it is contrary to the witness of normal ethical experience to suggest that the 'right' is simply the 'advisable' and not the 'obligatory'.

Again, Gilbert Murray, for whom one has the profoundest veneration, describes his *Weltanschauung* as 'comprising a profound belief in ethics and disbelief in all revelational religions', and he says: 'All my life, I have had almost constantly in the back of my mind . . . the aspirations, problems and *moral compulsions* which form part at least of the substance of religion.' [1] Here the compulsive character of the moral life is conceded, but what is the compelling power? Gilbert Murray seems to find it in our *humanitas*, by which he implies that if we are true to ourselves, truly human, we shall feel bound to cultivate a high ethic. That is a vitally important truth. When Christian theology speaks of

[1] *Stoics, Christian and Humanist*, p. 7. (Italics mine.)

man as 'fallen', it implies that while evil in many forms is all too active in human life, yet this evil does not belong to the essence of human nature, that when man is truly man he bears the divine image and likeness. The Christian view is that man, as such, is a creature who is under an absolute obligation to do that which is right. So far probably Gilbert Murray would agree, but while he would apparently say that this necessity is laid upon man simply by his own nature, the Christian maintains that it is laid upon man by God, and the witness of ethical experience is that the summons of which man is aware arises not out of himself but from a Higher Power to which he owes obedience.

Bertrand Russell takes a very different line. He suggests that morality is simply a matter of taste, comparable to a liking or a dislike for oysters, so that what is 'sin' in one man's eyes is 'virtue' in another's, and a criminal is not to be regarded as having done anything 'wicked' but simply as having behaved in a way that society dislikes.[1] If this theory were true we should have to admit that the liar and the swindler and the burglar and those guilty of the most hideous acts of violence are not doing anything 'wrong', but are simply indulging in tastes which society prefers to discourage; while those who deal justly and love mercy and in a spirit of benevolence seek to promote the well-being of their fellows are not doing anything 'right', but merely cherishing tastes which society is inclined to approve. Such a point of view would be repudiated as false by the overwhelming mass of mankind, by the irreligious as much as the religious. We know that certain things are wrong however much we may perversely like them, and that certain things are right however disinclined we may be to do them. Any average man would acknowledge that his conscience is concerned with what he ought to do, whether he likes it or not. All the well-known ethical theories are unsatisfying because they ignore the sense of absolute moral obligation, of 'transcendent constraint', to which inner experience testifies.

[1] *Religion and Science*, p. 237 ff.

The biological view of the ethical life is that right conduct has survival value and leads to the promotion of life. That right conduct often has a biological value is a significant fact. It is perfectly true that the virtues are, on the whole, the allies of health and life; while the vices, on the whole, make for disease and death. But the moral life of man cannot rightly be thought of as merely subserving a biological end. The categorical imperative does not summon us to take a particular course on the ground that it will benefit our health or prolong our life, but, on the contrary, it may even summon us to a course which is prejudicial to health and may be fatal to life, for issues are sometimes raised which are dearer than life itself. For instance, a doctor who feels impelled to minister to a plague-stricken people is clearly not taking that course as one likely to be biologically beneficial to him, for he may suffer in health and even forfeit life itself in the process.

Again, it is clear that if society is to exist at all, certain ethical standards must be observed. It is just a patent fact that unless men are reasonably truthful and honest and considerate of others and loyal to their obligations, society will be plunged into such chaos and confusion that it will destroy itself. But the fact remains that the categorical imperative, while it undoubtedly summons us to serve our day and generation and fulfil our obligations to our fellow-men, may also compel us to take a line that is most uncongenial to society.

This purely social view of morality was taken by Alexander Comfort in his broadcast talks in 1949.[1] After dismissing the Christian view of life and the world and insisting that we live in a universe so utterly indifferent to our welfare that the only course open to us is to help one another, he formulates what he calls the 'one commandment' of the particular type of Humanism which he adopts: 'Man's survival depends on the outcome of his struggle with a morally neutral universe, and on the maintenance of responsibility between men. Do nothing which increases the

[1] Published under the title *The Pattern of the Future*.

difficulties which any individual has to face, and leave nothing undone which diminishes them.' His ethical appeal amounts to this: 'As we are all in a desperate position, we have simply got to help one another through this grim business of life.' This is an attempt to found the moral life of man on despair, and in actual practice if such an appeal were addressed to men it would fall flat. That we ought to help one another is true enough, but that necessity is laid upon us not because we live in a universe indifferent to our welfare but because such conduct is felt to be essentially and eternally right, and that in itself raises the question as to whether a universe which has given birth to moral beings can be so morally indifferent after all.

Or a man may be prompted to adopt an ethical code in his own self-interest. He recognizes that unless he is tolerably truthful and honest, courteous and faithful in the performance of his duties, he cannot so much as earn his livelihood; or he perceives that by the observance of a certain ethical code he wins the approval and esteem of his fellows. But there is nothing more certain than that the Categorical Imperative is not a call to pursue self-interest, for, on the contrary, it often calls for action that means self-denial and self-sacrifice. Similarly the man who is utilitarian in his attitude may decide to act rightly because that course tends to produce pleasure for himself, for mankind and for all sentient creatures. It is true enough that if we take into our reckoning all the results, direct and indirect, near and remote, a right act is usually found to be a promoter of happiness, and a wrong act usually, at some point, brings misery in its train. But we are often aware of a summons to do right *whatever* the consequences.

The trouble with all these ethical attitudes is threefold. They deal with what Socrates would call attributes (*πάθη*) of the right, not with its essence (*οὐσία*). Then again, they make ethics a purely subjective affair and suggest that man excogitates for himself, and then adopts the moral laws by which he lives. The truth, however, is that there is nothing more objective than the

Moral Law. As G. E. Moore[1] says: 'We are now entitled to the conclusion that whatever the meaning of these words ("right" and "wrong") may be, it is not identical with any assertion whatever about either the feelings or the thoughts of men—neither those of any particular man, nor those of any particular society, nor those of some man or other, nor those of mankind as a whole. To predicate of an action that it is right or wrong is to predicate of it something quite different from the mere fact that any man or set of men have any particular feeling towards it or opinion about it.'

Once more, they leave entirely out of account the sense of absolute moral obligation which is the outstanding characteristic of ethical experience at its highest and deepest. A man who adopts a certain course from a high sense of moral obligation is not thinking in terms of the enhancement of his own life or of the cohesion of society or of human survival or of self-interest or of pleasure for himself or for others. He is taking a course which he feels he must take regardless of all consequences. Any ethical theory that leaves that aspect of ethical life out of account is an attempt to write Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark.

Before we pass on, a word must be said about two other theories which leave the 'transcendent constraint' out of account. Consider first of all Ethical Humanism. There always have been Ethical Humanists, but the movement came into great prominence in America just after the first world war. It was the left-wing expression of that 'Jazz' age, just as the Theology of Crisis was its right-wing expression. At that time there were many who (partly because of the horrors through which they had passed) had lost all anchorage in God and all faith in the possibility of knowing God. They had drifted from the old moorings. They felt that they were utterly at sea, without chart or compass or harbour for which to sail; that the twilight of the gods had come; and that no certain knowledge of ultimate reality could ever be gained. But amid all the uncertainty, one thing at least seemed

[1] *Ethics*, p. 143.

to some to be sure and steadfast, namely, ethical values. Whether there was a God or not, whether the spirit of man was mortal or immortal, these at least seemed to be quite certain—and the very continuance of human civilization, the very possibility of a decent human life on this planet, depended on man's quest of good, and so it was his obvious duty just to concentrate on that. The best-known representative of this point of view is Walter Lippmann, a man for whom we can only entertain great respect. Lippmann has defined this type of Humanism thus: 'Humanism signifies the intention of men to concern themselves with the discovery of a good life on this planet by the use of human faculties.'[1] There is apparently no need of worship or grace or belief in God or hope of immortality. The one issue is the 'intention' of man to discover for himself a good life, and the sole means to be used are to be found in man's native and unaided powers, which, it is assumed, are quite adequate to the task. The creed of Ethical Humanism is simply 'I believe in Man.' Its 'high religion', as Lippmann calls it, is godless, prayerless, and non-worshipping. What is truly admirable in such Humanists as Lippmann is their obvious devotion to the cause of human well-being and their lofty ethical tone.

The Ethical Humanist maintains that the Cosmos and its nature are matters of complete indifference to us, for outside ourselves there is no power anywhere to help us. All that we have got to do, therefore, is to cultivate the moral and spiritual side of our nature. Humanism is an attempt to construct an ethical religion on the twin foundations of the glorification of man and a studied indifference to the Cosmos. Both foundations are very brittle. In spite of all the grim evidence supplied by recent events and the present state of the world, the Humanist still pays too little heed to the sinister forces of evil at work in human nature. The other foundation is no less brittle. The Cosmos is a fact which cannot be left out of our philosophy of life. Man is a child of the Cosmos and, therefore, his nature must reveal something about

[1] *Hibbert Journal*, January 1931, p. 229. See also his *Preface to Morals*.

the nature of the Cosmos that gave him birth. If the Cosmos is just a blind, brute thing, why does man, its child, see and feel? If the Cosmos is through-and-through morally indifferent, why is man, its child, a moral and spiritual being? It is significant that the Bible begins with the story of creation. If the God of Redemption is not the God of Nature too, the moral and religious life of man has no roots in reality, and the last word will be with Nature, which will eventually sweep man and his religion and his moral ideas and ideals into the void whence they came. That vital connection between the world of Nature and the world of moral and spiritual values can be established only by a theism which asserts that God is both the Author of Nature and the Source and Spring of those moral and spiritual values without which, by common consent, we cannot live.

In attempting to combine a pessimistic view of Nature and an optimistic view of man, Humanism is attempting the impossible. It cheerfully calls on us to cultivate the loftiest moral and spiritual values, and at the same time sombrely assures us that it will all come to nothing in the end.

But if we believe that the noblest man has no more value than the fly of a summer's day, we shall inevitably grow rather cynical about ethical ideas and ideals, and 'the shared quest of the good life', for we shall feel that we are engaged in a lone and fruitless fight with a vast indifference. Lippmann himself realizes this, and in a poignant passage acknowledges that those who no longer believe in the religion of their fathers feel a vacancy in their lives; are perplexed by the consequences of their irreligion; have lost the certainty that their lives are significant and that it matters what they do with them, and are aware that they have succeeded only in substituting trivial illusions for majestic faith. As for the man who embraces this 'High Religion', Lippmann says that whether he sees life 'as comedy or high tragedy, or plain farce, he would affirm that the wise man can enjoy it.' But can he?

Further, Humanism destroys the very reverence for personality for which it pleads. It is self-contradictory to speak of the supreme

value of human personality and at the same time to regard man as a fortuitous by-product of a careless universe, his mental and spiritual life as an epiphenomenon, his ideals as comforting phantasies that enable him to forget his tragic position, and his future as hopeless. Such a view of man is bound to have—sooner or later—terrific repercussions on the ethical life and on all estimates of human value. As Dr. Fosdick[1] says: 'Humanism sucks the egg of personality's value, and then tries to hatch a high religion out of it.'

Further, man has not to 'discover' what the good life is, it is somehow 'revealed' to him. He does not just resolve that certain things are 'right' and their opposites 'wrong'—the fact of their rightness or wrongness is impressed upon him. This element of constraint from outside himself is inseparable from ethical experience. The transcendent constraint of which every man who really knows himself is aware is a link which unites man with God. When that fact is ignored, confusion arises in one way or another. C. C. Jung affirms that the state of mind of modern European man shows an alarming lack of balance, and he finds one of the causes in the loss of religious faith,[2] for, as Dr. Baillie points out, 'We can live in forgetfulness of God, but not in peace of mind. We can live without God's blessing, but not without His judgment.' The basic fact about human nature was stated by Augustine: 'Thou hast created us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee.'

There is yet another attempt to detach the ethical life from the sense of transcendent constraint, about which a word must be said, namely, that of Albert Schweitzer in his *Civilization and Ethics*. He depicts the sorry plight of modern civilization in the most sombre terms and pleads for an ethical revival. He reviews and dismisses as unsatisfactory all previous ethical theories. Refusing to make any assumptions, philosophical or religious, he starts out from what he claims to be the one thing we actually know, namely, 'will to live', and he claims that this 'will to live'

[1] *As I see Religion*, p. 88. [2] *Modern Man in Search of a Soul.*

inevitably gives rise to reverence for life; though how we pass inevitably from 'will to live' to 'reverence for life' is not clear. He defines Ethics as 'responsibility without limit to all that lives.' We are to regard all life as sacred. We must not pluck a flower or crush an insect or work on a hot summer evening with an open window lest perchance a moth should fly in and singe its wings at our lamp. That reverence for human beings is essential to civilization is clear. That humaneness towards the animal creation is a characteristic of a high civilization is no less certain. For this emphasis Schweitzer deserves all credit, but he carries his principle to foolish extremes. Are we to show reverence for bluebottle flies and fleas and lice and disease-carrying mosquitoes and rats and mice because they have the will to live? Whether, as he says, we should rescue an insect in danger of drowning in a puddle by providing it with a leaf to serve as a raft would surely depend on the insect!

More serious still, mere 'will to live' does not provide any basis for the ethical life. Schweitzer says that it drives him to 'reverence for life', but there is clearly nothing automatic in the process, otherwise the 'will to live' would lead everybody to 'reverence for life', and it is the most palpable of all facts that it does nothing of the kind, for in the human world as well as in the animal world it often leads to savage rivalry between opposing 'wills to live'. It is impossible to base ethics on any merely biological principle, for, as the Greeks recognized, Ethics is concerned not with 'will to live' (τὸ ζῆν) but with 'will to live well' (τὸ εὖ ζῆν), a completely non-biological principle. The right starting point for Ethics is not (as Schweitzer maintains) the fact that we know 'will to live', but the fact that we know we ought to live well. The 'will to live' does not and cannot of itself give rise to 'reverence for life', such reverence arises only in the man who for some reason feels constrained to show it. Schweitzer's ethical theory is a complete misfire.

(c) The Nature and Significance of the Transcendent Constraint

We can now turn more particularly to the consideration of that 'transcendent constraint' itself which is the vital nerve of the spiritual life. In order that we may look at the matter quite objectively let us take two famous examples of it in actual operation. As our first illustration consider the words which Socrates used (according to Plato's *Apology*) at his trial before the Athenian Assembly: 'If you think that a man of any worth at all ought to reckon the chances of life and death when he acts, or that he ought to think of anything but whether he is acting rightly or wrongly and as a good or bad man would act, you are grievously mistaken. . . . Athenians, I hold you in the highest regard and love; but I shall obey God rather than you; and as long as I have breath and strength, I shall not cease from philosophy, and from exhorting you, and declaring the truth to everyone of you whom I meet. . . . Be sure I shall not alter my way of life; no, not if I have to die for it many times.' The other example is a passage from a letter written by Sir Thomas More to King Henry VIII. The king wanted to divorce Catherine of Aragon, partly, perhaps chiefly, because (as S. R. Gardiner says) he had met 'a sprightly black-eyed flirt in her sixteenth year', Anne Boleyn. Henry told More of his wish, and More promised to study the question. After doing so, he informed the king that he could not conscientiously see any valid grounds for the dissolution of the marriage. In the hope of making Sir Thomas more amenable, the king appointed him Chancellor, and, after a decent interval, raised the divorce question again. Then More wrote: 'It is grievous in my heart that I am not able to serve Your Grace in this matter . . . but I ever bear in mind the words which Your Highness spoke to me on my first coming into your noble service, bidding me first look up to God and after that to you.'

Both these men acted from a high sense of moral obligation

felt to be categorical, absolute, in its quality. They were not thinking in terms of the biological value of right conduct—they were risking their lives. They were not thinking in terms of the cohesion of society or of human survival on this planet or of self-interest or of pleasure for themselves or for anybody else. They were acting regardless of all consequences. Still less were they declaring that it was their intention to concern themselves with the discovery of a good life, or that they were urged by a 'will to live', for they were responding loyally to a summons which had come to them from outside themselves, as they both believed, from God.

So when we probe our inner life we are aware of an obligation to do what we clearly perceive to be right, and this obligation at any rate *seems* to be imposed upon us from a source beyond ourselves. Of all the problems presented by our life-experience there is none quite so important as this sense of obligation. There is no doubt about the fact of moral obligation, for it is as certain as the fact that we are alive. The question in dispute is its source.

Kant found the source and spring of what he called the Categorical Imperative in man's reason, and therefore in the self. If Kant's view is correct, the self issues orders to the self, and that is the sum and substance of the Categorical Imperative. Such a view, however, does not harmonize with the findings of the moral consciousness. When we obey the Categorical Imperative we do not feel that we are obeying ourselves; and when we revere the Categorical Imperative we do not feel that we are revering ourselves. The Categorical Imperative is somehow laid upon us, and is not of our making; we can ignore it or defy it, but we cannot banish it or even alter it. True, the reason has its part to play, for if we were not rational beings we should not recognize the Categorical Imperative. But just as in perception the eye does not create the flower we see, but is simply the condition of our seeing it, so reason does not create the Categorical Imperative, but is simply the condition of our recognizing and

acknowledging it. As A. E. Taylor says: 'Now if the good will is no more than *my* will, or, to put it more precisely in the way in which Kant puts it, if there is no more profound and ultimate reason for my reverence for it than that it is my own will, does not absolute reverence for the good will and its law of duty degenerate into self-worship? . . . If the commands of the good will were *merely* the commands of some external power foreign to myself, if my own will did not "go along" with them, in obeying, I should be no more than a slave. . . . But, again, if these commands were only the commands of *my* will, why should I reverence and adore?'[1] So the theory that the sense of high moral obligation is simply and solely the creation of the reason leads to results which are its own refutation.

More common still is the notion that the Categorical Imperative comes from the Ideal Self, that what we are aware of is a demand made by the higher self upon the lower self. But as Dr. Baillie points out: 'Of the two parts of my nature that are here said to be in conflict, one does not exist, it only ought to exist. The tension is never between two desires, but essentially between the desired and the desirable, that is, between what I actually do desire and what I know I ought to desire but for the most part do not. . . . Nothing seems clearer to me now than that the conflict which I experience cannot possibly be regarded as merely interior to myself, but can only be caused in me by a constraint coming to me from beyond myself.'[2] So the sense of moral obligation cannot be simply the creation of the self.

It is interesting to note that even C. H. Waddington and Julian Huxley concede the point that the Categorical Imperative *seems* to come from beyond us and has an other-worldly and absolute character, but they resort to desperate expedients in order to avoid admitting that it *does* come from beyond us and *is* other-worldly and absolute in quality. Let one example suffice. After referring to a baby's solipsistic day-dream Waddington says: 'It is, I suggest, because the development of Ethics is connected with

[1] *Op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 151 f. [2] *Invitation to Pilgrimage*, p. 43.

this break-up of solipsism, that it has the character of other-worldliness, of absoluteness.'[1] The implication is that because at a certain stage in our infantile development we realized that there were other people in the world beside ourselves and began to adjust our behaviour accordingly, we have ever since falsely supposed that the Categorical Imperative represents a transcendent claim upon us, instead of regarding it as something arising out of ourselves. Such an explanation is totally inadequate to account for that high sense of moral obligation which, for example, we saw in action in Socrates and Sir Thomas More. As all the attempts to explain it away are far-fetched and at variance with one another, we can fairly conclude that no valid scientific or psychological 'explanation' of it has been found, or can be found, and so we can rest the more firmly on our conclusion that it is not just a creation of the self.

If the sense of high moral obligation has some purely human source, and that source is not the self, the only alternative is that it must be found in society, and must be regarded as the mere pressure of public opinion or the awareness that one must conform to the customs of society. But let a man once be convinced that morality is nothing more than a social convention, and his whole moral tone is lowered. It was said by Ferdinand Brunetière that the adoption by the leading men of France of the idea that morality was only a social convention proved more disastrous to the French than their crushing defeat in the Franco-Prussian War.[2] Of course, it is perfectly true that there are people who do take their moral cue from the society in which they move—they do in Rome as Rome does. They are chameleon-like, and change their moral code when they change their company. They behave in one way west of Suez and in a very different way east of it. But such variable morality is hardly worthy of the name. Further, as Eucken points out, 'a mere social convention morality can never cope with the natural impulses and passions, and the lower and

[1] *Science and Ethics*, p. 12.

[2] See quotation: G. Steven, *Psychology and the Christian Soul*, p. 32.

baser elements in human nature.'[1] The great moral pioneers and innovators were certainly *not* responding to the pressure of society. On the contrary they have invariably pilloried conventional morality. The early Hebrew prophets scarcely reflect the current morality of the eighth century. Socrates did not get his ideas from fifth-century Athens. And the Sermon on the Mount is not an echo of the ethical ideas current in Palestine in the first century of our era. As Sir David Ross says: 'Every now and then there arises in the course of history a genius who discovers some great moral truth which only needs to be proclaimed to be generally recognized; and all who come under his influence find their whole moral insight lifted to a higher plane.'[2] Again, if society were the source of morality, then it would be a law unto itself, and it could make whatever it pleased right or wrong; but, as a matter of fact, society too, unless it is to fall into utter chaos and corruption, has to acknowledge a Moral Law which has other sanctions than society itself provides and which it cannot ignore with impunity. The disastrous results which follow when any particular society acknowledges no law other than its own, and regards as right everything that enhances or seems to enhance its own power and prestige, and as wrong everything that diminishes or seems to diminish that power and prestige, have been made abundantly clear by the tragic events that have been played out on the European stage in recent years. The true voice of conscience calls upon us to defy accepted ethical standards far oftener than it allows us to conform to them; and it is not a mere negative thing that acts as a check on wrong action, but also a positive thing that indicates, and urges to, right action. Thus it is not to society that we must look for the source and spring of the high sense of moral obligation. It points to something beyond self and beyond society. It is a witness to the fact that we live not in a morally indifferent universe but in a world ruled by a Personal Moral Power.

However deficient Matthew Arnold's description of God as an

[1] *Der Wahrheitsgehalt der Religion*, p. 415. [2] *The Foundation of Ethics*, p. 20.

'Enduring Power, not ourselves, making for righteousness' may be, the fact remains that it emphasizes an aspect of God which every man may know, and which probably, at least in some dim and confused way, every man actually knows in his own inner experience, whether he realizes to the full the significance of that experience or not. God does reveal Himself in the inner life of man. It is theologically a great step forward, that we are ceasing now to speak of Natural Religion and Revealed Religion, and that we speak instead of General Revelation and Special Revelation. Every man knows something of that General Revelation—of what Dr. Baillie calls 'confrontation with God'—for probably the man does not exist who has not at some time been aware in some way of a Power not himself making for righteousness, and of the obligation to yield willing obedience to that Power.

'What, then, is religious faith?' asks E. W. Lyman. 'In its full nature religious faith is the response of the soul to the Divine Reality when that reality is apprehended as a Cosmic Moral Will.'[1] In this faith religion and a high ethic meet. They belong to each other. They are related to each other as the two poles which start currents of energy and preserve their balance, or as the two foci of an ellipse, or as the germ cell and the sperm cell from which a new organism springs.[2]

Thus, as we said at the beginning, this transcendent constraint, essentially ethical in content, is a vital and indispensable factor in the spiritual life. It testifies to the reality of God and at the same time reveals that man can rise to the full height of his moral and spiritual stature only as he lives in obedient fellowship with God. 'Religion is the soul of morality and morality is the body of religion.' There can be no genuine religious life that is not also ethical, and no thoroughgoing ethical life which is not also religious.

[1] *The Meaning and Truth of Religion*, p. 154. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 84.

II

GREEK RATIONALISM

'Greek Ethics are singularly untheological.'—GILBERT MURRAY: *Stoic, Christian and Humanist*, p. 45.

(*a*) THE GREEK EMPHASIS ON REASON

A GOOD many attempts have been made (and are still being made), on a purely rational basis, without any reference to God, or to that transcendent constraint which bears witness to Him, to find the meaning of life and to lay down principles for the conduct of life. As we have already seen, Kant found the source of the Categorical Imperative in Man's reason. But the greatest of all attempts on these lines is the architectonic scheme of that intellectual giant, Aristotle, and there are people to-day who see 'in Hellenism a superior type of Christianity, purged of dogma, and adorned with all the graces and gifts of culture.' True it is that if anybody is likely to have been successful in the task of giving meaning to life and showing how a man should conduct his life, by appealing to reason alone, Aristotle surely is the one. We are told by authorities on art, that the sculpture of Pheidias is so perfect that beyond Pheidias art can never go. Similarly it may be said that so far as rationalistic attempts to solve the problem of the meaning and conduct of life are concerned, beyond Aristotle rationalism can never go. If, therefore, Aristotle was not successful, nobody else is likely to succeed. So let us consider what Aristotle had to say on the question.

It could easily be shown that Greek religion, such as it was, exercised comparatively little influence on Greek ethics, and it follows, therefore, that Greek ethics were almost completely independent of religion. That may seem a strange thing to say in view of the ethical teaching of Plato, for as Heine has said,

'Plato's ethic is religion and has a religious foundation.'[1] The truth, however, is that there is a great gulf between the teaching of Plato and the dominant trend of Greek thought, so much so that the Platonic spirit has been pronounced 'an alien phenomenon in Greece.' As Sir Richard Livingstone says: 'Though in a thousand ways Plato is a Greek of Greeks, in all that is most distinctive in his thought he is so far a heretic that if Hellenism had been a persecuting religion, it would have been bound to send him to the stake. Nietzsche, who justly pointed out that he was one of the earliest defaulters from Greek traditions, called him, in his ugly German way, *präexistent-Christlich.*'[2] Aristotle dismissed as irrelevant Plato's conception of a good which is the end and aim of the whole universe; he rejected his master's other-worldliness, and dealt simply and solely with the concrete ethical problems of actual human experience in this present world. In his Ethics there is not a trace of the transcendentalism of Plato. By Ethics he means 'the philosophy of human affairs.' He makes numerous references to 'the Gods', but never once in the interests of Ethics. His viewpoint is purely humanistic, and he appeals *solely to reason.*

It would be difficult for any average man born and bred within the pale of Christendom, even if he has never embraced the Christian faith, to decide to what extent his moral ideas and ideals have been influenced by Holy Scripture and Christianity, but his indebtedness, directly or indirectly, to these two sources is undoubtedly great. It is well to keep this fact in mind when we consider the ethics of Aristotle. The Greek had no Bible. The popular religion had little or no bearing on the ethical problems of life. As Gilbert Murray says: 'By the time of Plato, the traditional religion of the Greek States was, if taken at its face value, a bankrupt concern. There was hardly one aspect in which it could bear criticism; and, in the kind of test that chiefly matters, the satisfaction of man's ethical requirements and aspirations, it

[1] *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, p. 518.
[2] *The Greek Genius and its meaning to us*, p. 183.

was, if anything, weaker than elsewhere.'[1] The gods revered by the Greeks did not present to their worshippers a high moral ideal. To quote Gilbert Murray again: the Olympian gods 'are conquering chieftains, royal buccaneers. They fight and feast and play and make music; they drink deep, and roar with laughter at the lame smith who attends them. They are never afraid, except of their own king. They never tell lies except in love and war.'[2] Of these Olympian gods and goddesses there was only one, Artemis, who was not credited with illegitimate children. Zeus was represented as seducing the wives and daughters of men, and his consort consoled herself by tormenting her rivals and their children. 'A Greek wished to be drunk, Dionysus was his patron; to be vicious, and he turned to Aphrodite Pandemos. He was a thief, and could rely on the help of Hermes.'[3] So with no authoritative revelation to which to appeal, and no Great Exemplar like Jesus Christ to serve as guide, whence did the Greek derive his ethical ideas and ideals? He simply reasoned them out. 'If the Jew was in doubt about any matter of right and wrong, it was easy for him to decide. His God had issued commands, and were they not written in the books of Moses? But the Greek had no such authorities to appeal to. He was thrown back on his own reason, his own sense of what was right and true. This was the workshop in which his beliefs were hammered out.'[4] The measure of success he achieved in this way was truly remarkable, an unanswerable challenge to the doctrine of total depravity, for if man can spin out of his own inwards such an ethical system as that of the Greeks, it is grotesque to speak of him as by nature opposed to everything that is good. As St. Paul would say, the Greek, though he had no (Jewish) Law, showed the effect of the Law, the moral content of the Law, written on his heart.

Aristotle's appeal, then, is to reason. He insists that moral conduct is through-and-through reasonable conduct. The rules which reason lays down, the man who is governed by reason and not

[1] *Four Stages of Greek Religion*, p. 107.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 65.
[3] Sir Richard Livingstone, *op. cit.*, p. 52.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 55.

by passion will obey. This insistence that virtuous conduct is the only type of conduct worthy of a rational man, and that vicious conduct is irrational, slavish and brutish, is a valuable contribution to ethical thought. Good conduct is reasonable. Bad conduct is unreasonable. Yet after all, the right and the good are not exhaustively described when we call them reasonable—reasonableness is only one of their attributes, it is not their essence. It would be pitifully inadequate to describe St. Francis of Assisi simply as a 'reasonable' person, or to speak of a man (say) like Himmler simply as unreasonable. There is something more involved in the right and the good than mere reasonableness.

It is this emphasis on reason that leads Aristotle to exalt the intellectual above the moral. He maintains that the intellect is the highest of all our powers. He insists that men are dearest to the gods when they are engaged in intellectual activity, that the intellect is the divine principle in man. Here we are brought face to face with one of the major problems of modern civilization. There is to-day a strong tendency to exalt the intellectual above the moral, knowledge above wisdom. This is a scientific age, and the whole fabric of modern science is a triumph of man's intellect. But clearly the enormous powers which science is placing at man's disposal are a blessing to mankind only as they are directed to good ends. Science supplies power, but, unless that power is directed by good men, it will prove as mischievous and disastrous a thing as fire-arms in the hands of a madman or an ape—a fact which plainly suggests the primacy of the moral over the intellectual. The present tragic position of the world is due not to any lack of intelligence or νοῦς (e.g., the paraphernalia of modern warfare bespeak a high degree of intellectual power) but to lack of virtue. And as Sir David Ross says: 'When I ask myself whether any increase of knowledge, however great, is worth having at the cost of wilful failure to do my duty or of a deterioration of character, I can only answer in the negative. The infinite superiority of moral goodness to anything else is clearest in the case of the highest form of good-

ness, the desire to do one's duty. But even of lesser virtues the same appears true. And if virtue is the thing best worth aiming at for oneself, it is the thing best worth trying to promote in others.'[1] Such a contention is in complete harmony with the Christian Gospel, which certainly exalts the moral above the intellectual—without in any way underrating the intellectual, for the Christian is called upon to be as shrewd as a serpent in addition to being as harmless as a dove; and, as the Parable of the Dishonest Steward indicates, he is to make sure that he is not outdone in sagacity and intellectual acumen by mere men of the world.

Thus Aristotle's idea that the 'good' and the 'right' are simply the reasonable is inadequate, and his exaltation of Pure Intellect as the greatest and divinest thing in the world is untrue to the facts of life.

(*b*) Aristotle and the Chief Good

What then is the Chief Good? The Christian view is that the chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever. Needless to say that is not Aristotle's idea of the Chief Good. According to him, the supreme good is *εὐδαιμόνια*, to which the simplest English equivalent is 'well-being'.

In popular Greek *εὐδαιμόνια* meant having a good *δαίμων*, that is, good fortune or good luck, in the sense of an abundance of this world's goods. But philosophers sought to give a deeper meaning to the term. Heraclitus said that man's character was his *δαίμων*; and Democritus declared that 'Well-being lieth not in flocks and herds; the Soul is the dwelling-place of the *δαίμων*.' Aristotle gave to the term a meaning all his own. The vulgar, he said, regard the pleasures of the flesh as the chief good. The more refined seek the chief good in honour, and desire especially to be honoured for their virtues, so that for them virtue is a higher end than honour. But, said Aristotle, virtue is not the chief good, for a virtuous man, in spite of his virtue, might suffer the greatest

[1] Sir David Ross, *The Right and the Good*, pp. 152 f.

misfortune, and nobody could reasonably regard such a man as one who enjoyed well-being. (No wonder St. Paul spoke of the Greeks as dismissing the cross as foolishness.) Virtue, he said, is chosen for the sake of well-being. 'We choose everything, so to speak, for the sake of something else, except Well-being, for this is the end which comprehends all others.'[1] Well-being is something that belongs to the good life as a whole. So what is the good life? It is the kind of life proper to a man who fulfils his true function. That function is to be found not in mere living, for plants live; or in mere sentience and appetition, for these are found in animals. The kind of life peculiar to man is a life of rational activity, and only as he fulfils this function well can he achieve well-being. Such a man's conduct, instead of being governed by mere desire, will conform to the right rules laid down by reason; and he will thus be adorned with the virtues proper to man, such as Justice, Temperance and Courage. Complete well-being is found not in the practical life of the citizen, soldier or statesman, however virtuous he may be, but only in the life of the contemplative philosopher, a life of ceaseless intellectual activity, blissfully absorbed in the vision of truth.

The chief merit of Aristotle's conception of the Chief Good is that it does exalt goodness (though not to the supreme place), and it does insist that goodness of character is indispensable to a human being worthy of the name.

But almost all the objections advanced against Hedonism in every form can be brought also against Aristotle's Eudaemonism. The theory that every activity is good or bad, right or wrong, as it conduces or fails to conduce to Well-being is belied by some of the most obvious facts of life. For example, an act of sacrificial heroism by which a man rescues a fellow-creature from a blazing building at the cost of an agonizing death from burns, can hardly be said to have contributed to his Well-being, but the superlative goodness of such an activity cannot be denied. As Lecky says: 'The terms honour, justice, rectitude or virtue, and their

[1] *Nichomachean Ethics*, X. vi. 6.

equivalents in every language, present to the mind ideas essentially and broadly differing from the terms prudence, sagacity, or interest. The two lines of conduct may coincide, but they are never confused, and we have not the slightest difficulty in imagining them antagonistic. When we say a man is governed by a high sense of honour, or by strong moral feeling, we do not mean that he is prudently pursuing either his own interests or the interests of society.'[1] In other words, a high-minded man is not just seeking his own well-being, but is obeying an Imperative regardless of the consequences. But Aristotle apparently does not take into account that Categorical Imperative which is the outstanding feature of ethical experience. He knows only the hypothetical imperative: 'If you wish for Well-being, you must act thus and thus.' From his system the Moral Ideal as High Obligation, as 'Transcendent Constraint' is completely absent, for he identifies the Moral Ideal not with what is most truly desirable, but with what we actually desire, namely, our own well-being.

(*c*) Aristotle and the Way to Goodness of Character

Having decided that goodness of character is essential to Well-being, Aristotle naturally has to raise the question as to how it can be produced. According to him, the two factors are Legislation, and Habituation.

Aristotle maintains that if men are to be made virtuous it will be by means of the State whose main instrument is Law. He is convinced that the mass of men cannot be led to virtue by mere persuasion, a method which is successful only with the noble minded, because he says (almost in the spirit of Machiavelli's *Prince*) 'they are of such a nature that they do not yield to a sense of shame, but only to fear; and they do not refrain from what is base because it is disgraceful, but because of the penalties attached

[1] *History of European Morals*, Vol. I. p. 34.

to it.'[1] Even Plato seems to have had perfect confidence in the omnipotence of Law, so far at any rate as the training of the young is concerned. 'The legislator,' he says, 'can persuade the minds of the young of anything; so that he has only to reflect and find out what belief will be of greatest public advantage, and then use all his efforts to make the whole community utter one and the same word in their songs and tales and discourses all their life long.'[2] Such a policy, however, is surely regimentation and not true ethical education. What can be accomplished for evil in this way has been made abundantly clear by the modern Authoritarian State—Fascist or Communist—and it is conceivable that, given the right legislators, much might be accomplished for good by a similar method.

That the magistracy can and should, by the enforcement of sound laws, exercise a disciplinary power, seek to check anti-social conduct, and build up a well-ordered civic life, is obvious enough. But though the law may in this way make citizens well-behaved, it clearly does not make them good, for there is no ethical goodness in abstinence from anti-social conduct in order to escape punishment.

It is true that Law in some form has an essential contribution to make to ethical goodness, for it can supply knowledge of right and wrong, and clearly a man must know what right and wrong are if he is to cleave to the one and abhor the other. In this sense even Christianity, which is essentially non-legalistic, cannot entirely dispense with the idea of Law. The Christian finds his Law in the will of God and the example of Christ, and that clearly implies that he has some knowledge of the will of God, and of the virtues of Christ. But while Aristotle rightly insists that knowledge is essential to virtue, he differs sharply from Socrates who contended that knowledge *is* virtue. According to Xenophon, Socrates once declared that 'he who knows the beautiful and good will never choose anything else.'[3] From

[1] *Nic. Ethics*, X. ix. 3.
[2] Jowett's *Plato*, Vol. V, p. 42 (Laws).
[3] *Memorabilia*, III, ix. 5.

that fallacy Aristotle was free. He was fully alive to the fact that a man might know the beautiful and good and even then choose the base, simply because his knowledge of good is overcome by the force of unworthy passion welling up out of his irrational self so that he does wrong in spite of a desire to do right. In several passages he speaks in a way that reminds one of St. Paul's 'The good that I want to do, I do not; but the evil that I do not want to do I practise. For I delight in the law of God according to the inner man, but I see another Law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and making me prisoner to the law of sin that is in my members. O wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death?' That is a cry for redemption, and for St. Paul redemption was primarily emancipation from the power of sin brought about by such a change in his nature through Divine action that he found pleasure only in the right and the good. That was a problem that Aristotle could not solve, though—at one point—he came somewhat near to St. Paul's solution. 'Some suppose,' he says, 'that we become good by nature, others by custom, others by teaching. It is clear that nature's part is not in our power, but belongs to those who are most truly fortunate by reason of certain divine agencies.' (*διά τινας θείας αἰτίας*).[1]

The other factor in the formation of good character is habituation. What the law lays down as right and good, a man must compel himself to practise, until the thing becomes habitual and then good character has been formed. By doing just acts, a man becomes just, by doing brave deeds he becomes brave, and so on. Aristotle says in effect: 'Do virtuous acts and you will become virtuous in character.'

That there is an element of truth here is obvious enough. It is a vitally important thing to form good habits. The idea, however, that habituation is the way to character is true only to a very limited extent. If the practice of virtue is merely an art, like the art of walking, an art in which practice makes us more and more

[1] *Nic. Ethics*, X. ix. 6.

efficient, it may degenerate into as purely a mechanical thing as walking, and the resultant virtuous man may be no more than a moral robot. There is profound truth in Miguel De Unamuno's dictum: 'To fall into a habit is to begin to cease to be moral.' High character can never be formed by mere habit, for absolutely indispensable to it is the conscious and deliberate choice of the better course along with a lively appreciation of moral values.

Again, since the Sermon on the Mount, it has become a mere commonplace that good conduct does not necessarily imply good character. The key to a man's character is to be found not in what he does but in what he is. At one point Aristotle admits this: 'Moral choice seems to be more closely akin to virtue and to be a more decisive test of moral character than actions are.'[1] That is clearly true. A man's external conduct may be quite correct and yet his character may be bad. He may never be guilty of a vicious act, and yet his heart may be in a vicious state, the prey of lascivious thinking, desiring and imagining. He may never be guilty of an anti-social act, while all the time malice and envy and jealousy and hatred may be coiling like a veritable brood of reptiles in his inner life. Hence the emphasis of Jesus on a good disposition—it takes a good tree to produce really good fruit. As Middleton Murry points out, the emphasis of Jesus was set irrevocably on being, not doing.[2] Martin Luther expressed the mind of the Master when he said: 'Good pious acts never make a good pious man, but a good pious man produces good pious acts.' So Aristotle's habituation principle does not take us very far.

Further, when he calls upon men to compel themselves to act in a certain virtuous way, he is calling upon them to do precisely the thing they cannot do if they have a strong bias in the contrary direction. As Sir David Ross affirms: 'Goodness of character is the only condition that with even the slightest degree of probability tends to make for the doing of right acts. If a man is not morally good, it is only by the merest accident that he ever does what he ought.'[3] So when Aristotle makes the doing of good acts

[1] *Nic. Ethics*, III. ii. 1. [2] *God*, p. 94. [3] *Foundations of Ethics*, p. 310.

the condition of developing good character, he simply puts the cart before the horse. It is only as a man has a good disposition that he can be expected to repudiate that which is evil and stick to that which is good. But as to how a man can get a good disposition, no Humanist can ever say. As we have already seen, Aristotle felt that some Divine agency was necessary to effect that. In spite of all that he has to say about Legislation and Habituation, there are times when he himself realizes that the prime and indispensable factor is a good disposition; as for instance when he admits, 'So then there must be, to begin with, a kind of affinity to virtue in the disposition; which must love what is honourable and hate what is disgraceful.'[1] 'For he is perfected in self-mastery who not only abstains from bodily pleasures but is glad to do so; whereas he who abstains but is sorry to do so does not possess self-mastery.'[2] But as to how men can be put into that desirable state of mind and heart, he is quite in the dark.

(*d*) Aristotle on the Nature of Goodness

And what is a good man, according to Aristotle? He admits that man has certain natural virtues which he shares with the animal creation. Unlike some nineteenth-century scientists who represented Nature as a scene of nothing but cruelty and carnage, Aristotle stresses the part played amongst all living things by parental love and care; and in a measure he anticipates Prince Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid* by appealing to the friendliness and helpfulness which members of the same species so often display to one another. He maintains, however, that these natural virtues which are instinctive, have to be combined with an intellectual element before they become virtues in the full sense of the term, in other words, they have to become conscious and deliberate.

This point comes out clearly in his famous doctrine of the

[1] *Nic. Ethics*, X. ix. 8. [2] *Ibid.*, II. iii. 1.

'Mean'. He appeals to the fact that in any given situation a man can be bad in many ways, but good only in one. One might illustrate the point by appealing to the temperature of the body. The normal temperature is 98·4° F.—this is the right temperature, and any other, whether above or below the norm, indicates that there is something wrong. Any temperature above this represents an excess, and any temperature below it represents a deficiency. This right temperature is analogous to Aristotle's 'mean'. So he maintains, in every situation there is only one reaction which is good, all other reactions are bad, and their badness consists in their excess or deficiency. In respect of Anger, for example, the mean state is πραότης, 'gentleness', and the gentle man is angry only when he ought to be angry—with the right persons, for right reasons, in the right way, and for the right length of time. Men whose anger is too easily, or too frequently, or too violently roused, err by excess; while those whose anger cannot be roused in any circumstances so that they are coldly indifferent when they ought to be angry, err by deficiency. This does not mean that Aristotle made a merely quantitative difference between goodness and badness. Just as hydrogen and oxygen in certain fixed proportions combine chemically to form water, a substance which is quite different from either of the component gases, so the ethical mean is a 'fixed proportion in which opposites neutralize each other and give rise to a new product.'[1] Thus violence and callousness in certain proportions neutralize each other and give rise to meekness which is different from either of them. So Aristotle's good man is characterized by the four cardinal virtues exalted by Plato: Uprightness, Fortitude, Self-mastery, and Wisdom. He possesses also the social virtues of Liberality (the mean between prodigality and stinginess), Great-mindedness (the mean between vanity and meanness of spirit), Gentleness (the mean between violence and cold indifference), Truthfulness (the mean between exaggeration and dissimulation), Modesty (the mean between shamelessness and shyness), and Just resentment—

[1] This illustration is from J. Burnet, *The Ethics of Aristotle*, p. 71.

that is, a feeling of satisfaction when people get their deserts (the mean between envy and ignoble pleasure in another's pain).

What is to be said of this scheme? It is somewhat aristocratic. Just as Aristotle's theoretical teaching was addressed only to the intelligentsia, and not to the common man, so his practical teaching is addressed in the main to the privileged classes, to well-to-do, leisured, educated citizens. From the Christian point of view there are serious deficiencies in Aristotle's sketch of the good man. There is little emphasis on active benevolence, and where it occurs it is usually associated with the idea of indulging one's sense of superiority—kindness itself is thus ego-centric, in striking contrast to the Christian paradox that to save one's life is to lose it. Chastity is not expressly mentioned—yet there was need of it, for prominent men in Greek society lived with their mistresses openly without any loss of reputation, and according to Demosthenes every man required beside his wife at least two mistresses. (Vice for Aristotle is simply an error of the practical judgment.) There is no mention of that true Great-mindedness which we call magnanimity, and which is generous to the undeserving. There is no suggestion that human greatness reaches its peak in sacrificial service. In some respects worst of all, there is no mention of the brotherhood of man. Greeks exaggerated rather than minimized the distinctions between men—Greek and barbarian, gentleman and artisan, man and woman, freeman and slave. The Greeks would have found such a phrase as 'the interests of humanity as a whole' meaningless. They did not think of humanity as a whole, they thought of it as divided into two sections, Greeks and barbarians, and of the Greek world as an oasis of intelligence and culture ringed round by a wide expanse of barbarism. As with racial distinctions, so with class distinctions. Artisans had no political rights and slaves had no rights at all. The Greeks acquiesced without a twinge of conscience or a trace of repining in the institution of slavery. Aristotle spoke of the slave as a tool with life in it, and of the tool as a lifeless slave; and though he was anxious to mitigate the worst abuses of slavery, he justified

the institution as a permanent one by the consideration that barbarians were slaves by nature, and that it was to their own interest to be living tools. He regarded woman as inferior to man. 'A man', he said, 'would be considered a coward who was only as brave as a woman.' Then, too, as Sir Richard Livingstone says: 'If the highest thing in human nature is the reason, still more if leisure and private means (to say nothing of the other accessories which Aristotle demands) are necessary to its development and exercise, the majority of men are excluded from achieving the end for which they were born. What meaning can Hellenism have for the ordinary worker in factory and farm? How many inhabitants of our big cities could understand its ideals, or, if they understood, could achieve them? Happiness is the privilege of a small élite, a tiny fraction of mankind.'[1]

Thus at many vital points Aristotle's ethical insight, great as it was, was defective. His ethical scheme is totally inadequate to the needs of the modern world, and, needless to say, it falls far below the Christian level. His good man is a rather cold, statuesque figure, uninspired and uninspiring. He has no sense of sin. He is a stranger to humility—for he regards himself as a self-made man. His goodness is due not to willing obedience to any Categorical Imperative but to his own tempering into due porportion of the elements of his nature. As Eichrodt[2] has pointed out, in Greek thought the spiritual unity of the human Ego is to be achieved by analysing and co-ordinating and then harmoniously binding together the individual spiritual forces. The Christian view is that character-building is not a mechanical process in which virtues are, so to speak, weighed out and then compounded, but rather a spontaneous growth from one vital principle—the love of God and the love of man, which results in that spiritual union with God that makes it possible for the energies of the Spirit of God to flow into the life of man. In contrast to Hellenism which regarded intellect (*νοῦς*) as the divinest thing in human life, Christianity exalts love (*ἀγάπη*) as the divinest quality that can

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 164. [2] *Man in the Old Testament*, p. 24.

adorn a human being. 'Though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all secrets and all knowledge, yet have not love, I am nothing.' Thus, as Sir Richard Livingstone says, 'On the Christian view the best thing in life, the highest thing in man (i.e., ἀγάπη), can be possessed and enjoyed by the most obscure, insignificant and humble of mankind. We are too accustomed to the idea to be surprised by it, but without the life of Christ it would have seemed fantastic.'[1]

(*e*) The Weakness of Greek Humanism

Aristotle's treatise on 'Ethics' is a sort of preface to his treatise of 'Politics', so that in his ethical teaching he is in the main concerned with man as a citizen in the Greek City-state. He thus makes Ethics, in a sense, subordinate to Politics, for his aim is to show what sort of man the individual must be if he is to play a worthy part as a member of the Commonwealth. The Aristotelian Ethic is, therefore, a secular Ethic, largely determined by the needs of a particular social structure, and addressed not to man as man but to man as citizen—as though man's supreme function was to serve the State. It is precisely here that the gravest weakness of Aristotle's Ethics is to be found. It is the witness of ethical experience at its highest that man is a being under an absolutely unconditional obligation to do that which is right—whether it is to the state's advantage or not, but with that aspect of things Aristotle does not deal. The idea of 'Moral Duty', 'Moral Obligation', 'the Categorical Imperative', 'an Imperious Ought', does not appear to have occurred to him at all, he is concerned solely with human affairs, and his scheme is humanistic throughout. By thus isolating the ethical life of man from any divine constraint and thereby in effect separating the life of man from God, he failed to give any satisfying interpretation of life itself. Greek Humanism, seen supremely in Aristotle, was bound

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 166.

to lead sooner or later to pessimism—as Humanism in all its forms inevitably does. When it discovered that its Idol, 'Man', had feet of clay, and worse still, when it reflected on the fact that the Idol as a whole was soon to be pulverized by death, it inevitably began to question the very faith by which it lived, and to see in man a tragic figure whose fairest loves and highest hopes, whose most heroic endeavours and noblest aspirations, were to end in nothingness. This shadow falls on Aristotle himself as he reveals when he says: 'The more a man possesses all virtues, and the happier he is, the more painful will death be to him; for life is most worth living to such a man, and he will lose the greatest blessings and he knows it; and that is painful.'[1] If a man believes that death means the extinction of all moral and spiritual values, that conviction will, of necessity, depress his estimate of those values. It is impossible simultaneously to take a high view of man and a low view of human destiny. If a soulless nature is ultimately to extinguish the spirit of man, all the higher moral and spiritual aspects of human life can be regarded only as epiphenomena. Nobody has ever stated the case quite so vividly as Aldous Huxley: 'The spirit has no significance; there is only the body. However lovely the feathers on a bird's head they perish with it; and the spirit which is a lovelier ornament than any perishes too. The farce is hideous . . . and in the worst of bad taste. Finally the flesh dies and putrifies; and the spirit presumably putrifies too. And there's an end of your omphaloskepsis, with all its by-products, God and justice and salvation and all the rest of them.'[2] When such ideas capture the minds of men, a certain cynicism is inevitable, and they cannot resist the conclusion that human life is vanity, and all human endeavours, in the end, futile. That was the mood of many Greeks, and that is why 'throughout Greek literature there is always the haunting undertone of melancholy, a sense of frustration and unfulfilment.'[3] That pessimism reached

[1] *Nic. Ethics*, III. ix. 4.
[2] *Barren Leaves*, pp. 334 and 366 (Phoenix Library).
[3] F. R. Barry, *The Relevance of Christianity*, p. 61.

its climax in what Professor Bury in conversation with Gilbert Murray called 'a fall or failure of something, a failure of nerve.' One sometimes wonders—with all due deference—if this 'failure-of-nerve' theory is sound. What was the change in Greek thought which these scholars describe as failure of nerve? It was, according to Gilbert Murray, a loss of self-confidence, of hope in this life, a cry for infallible revelation, a conversion of the soul to God. In a word, the Greek mind ceased to find its hope in man and turned to God. Was this failure of nerve? Might it not be more adequately described as the recognition of the bankruptcy of Humanism? As Sir Richard Livingstone says, 'Humanism cannot satisfy those who have found a fatal flaw in human nature.'[1] The flaw is there, and to see it is not 'failure of nerve' but the recognition of fact. Bishop Rawlinson surely comes nearer the truth when he says, 'The old self-confident Humanism of Classical Hellas, the rationalism which had believed it possible "to see life steadily and to see it whole", which had looked out on the world with a certain directness, and had believed in the capacity of philosophical thought to attain speculative truth, had given place to a mood of pessimism, a despair of inquiry, a longing for some sure word of revelation. We may call it according to our taste and predilection, "a failure of nerve" or the dawn of humility.'[2]

Faith in man and faith in life are in the last resort possible only on the foundation of the belief that at the heart and centre of the universe there is a holy and righteous God who loves men, has made their salvation part of His Eternal Purpose, and calls them to willing obedient co-operation with Himself, as the 'transcendent constraint' testifies. On that foundation, totally lacking in Greek Humanism, Christianity is based, and life simply will not work in any other way. The greatness of the contribution of Hellenism to the enrichment of human life must be freely acknowledged, and Christianity is neither a cancellation of it nor a declension from it, but (as Thomas Aquinas, for one, recognized) the development and completion of it.

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 191. [2] *The New Testament Doctrine of Christ*, p. 60.

III

ROMAN STOICISM

Propter virtutem enim iure laudamur et in virtute recte gloriamur; quod non contingeret, si id donum a deo non a nobis haberamus.—CICERO, *De Natura Deorum*, III. 36.

(*a*) THE ORIGIN AND PRINCIPLES OF STOICISM

ABOUT 315 B.C. there arrived in Athens, from his native city of Citium in Cyprus, a young man named Zeno. In spite of his Greek name, he was probably of mixed descent, and was often taunted with being a Phœnician. His Semitic ancestry was doubtless partly responsible for the strong ethical emphasis of the system of philosophy which he founded.

When Zeno arrived at Athens, men were morally and spiritually adrift. As a result of the conquests of Alexander the Great, the Greek city-state had fallen, so that the idea of living for the welfare of his city was no longer a guide to conduct for the Greek citizen. Then, too, the Olympian gods were discredited and the traditional religion consequently in ruins. There was thus a desperate need of a religion or a philosophy which would teach men how to conduct their lives. After many years of study in the various philosophical schools at Athens, Zeno eventually (in 294 B.C.) founded a school of his own, which met in the *Stoa Poecile* (ἡ στοὰ ἡ ποικίλη) near the market-place. His followers were first called Zenonians, and then Stoics.

While Zeno gleaned something from all the schools, he was probably influenced most by the Cynics, a school founded by Antisthenes, a friend and pupil of Socrates, which met in the Gymnasium of Cynosarges (? κύων ἀργός, white dog). The Cynics taught that virtue was the only good and that nothing else was of any worth at all. They extolled courage, justice and wisdom.

As an example of endurance, Hercules was held up as a model. They deemed work more honourable than idleness. They scorned class-distinctions and social conventions and sought to escape from the ills connected therewith by a 'return to nature', by which they meant austere simplicity of life. The renowned Diogenes belonged to this school. He declared himself a citizen of the world. He was a brother not only to all men but to the beasts as well, and when about to die recommended that his body should be thrown to the dogs and wolves to appease their hunger, that so he might be of some use to his brothers when he was dead. The main ideas of the Cynics passed into Stoicism. It was while he was still under Cynic influence that Zeno wrote his *Republic* (πολιτεία). This perfect state of his embraces mankind. Each citizen regards himself as a citizen of the world, and not just of his native city. In this ideal state there are no images or temples, for they are unworthy of the Deity; no sacrifices, for God is not to be appeased by gifts; no law courts, for citizens do not dispute with one another; no statues, for the virtue of the citizens is the true adornment of the city; no distinction of classes, for all are wise men; no distinctive dress for the sexes, for the virtues and duties of both are the same. The fundamental aims of Stoic philosophy are here set forth.

Zeno was concerned primarily with the practical question as to how man should live. But before he could tackle that, he had —quite rightly—to decide what man should believe.

In reply to the Sceptics who claimed that no knowledge was possible to man, since even sense-perception cannot be relied on, for to our eyes a straight stick appears bent in a pool, Zeno held that some things are perceived with such distinctness that no room is left for doubt. Sense-perception, he declared, is reliable, and when it seems to deceive us, it is our interpretation that is at fault. Thus he concluded that the world is real and knowable.

His next problem was to decide the nature of this real knowable world. Zeno took over from the Ionian philosophers the idea that the multiplicity of things was derived from four elements—

earth, water, air, fire. These were not elements in the sense of modern chemistry, for they could be changed into one another. Three of these elements were passive. Fire alone was active. Out of fire came air; out of air, water; and out of water, earth. The Creative Fire (*πῦρ τεχνικόν*) was thus the primal force from which everything was derived and to which everything would eventually return. Zeno followed Heraclitus in identifying this Fire with Logos, Reason, the Orderly Law, which governs all the processes of unending change. The Logos on its material side was Fire. The Fire on its spiritual side was Logos. As Logos, God brings all things to pass, and His wisdom steers all things. As Fire, God creates and reabsorbs all things into Himself. For Heraclitus, God, Zeus, Fire, Logos were convertible terms. Zeno, too, regarded this Fire as God—a subtle material susbstance, which was immanent in the whole world.

> All are but parts of one stupendous whole,
> Whose body Nature is, and God the soul.[1]

God was not an abstract idea, but a Body, real and concrete, for according to Zeno only a Body could act or be acted upon. Similarly and for the same reason, the soul of man was a material substance, an exhalation from the body. Zeno's system was thus materialistic, but not in the modern sense of that term, for he endowed matter with the characteristics of Spirit. His system was also pantheistic, but again not in the modern sense of the term, for he denied that the whole world was equally God. God was not the whole of matter, but the finest part of it. He was the Fiery Ether that governs the world. Part of the Fire had got condensed and heavy, thus losing its divinity, and had degenerated into air, water, earth, and the ordinary fire that burns—mere passive material upon which the Divine Fire acted. Organic beings grew according to regular types because the Divine Reason in them was a *λόγος σπερματικός*. These *λόγοι σπερματικοί* controlled the development of the germ into (for example) an oak

[1] Pope, *Essay on Man*, Ep. I. 1. 267 f.

or an ash, into a mouse or a lion or a man. The whole world and all the events in it (except the deeds of bad men) were an expression of a Supreme Purpose. Nothing happened by chance. Men might call the process Fate or Destiny, but in reality it was Intelligent Law, all-pervading Providence (*πρόνοια*). 'To the perfect rightness of the Whole the Stoic clings with immovable conviction.'[1] He believed that everything that happened was for the best. Apparent bad fortune was in reality good fortune, for it offered man an opportunity of bearing it bravely. 'To be grieved or displeased with anything that happened in the world is direct apostasy from the nature of the universe.'[2] There was to be a periodic conflagration (*ἐκπύρωσις*) when everything would be reabsorbed in God, and this was to be followed by a repetition of all that existed before.

It is the cardinal assumption of Stoicism that the nature of man is identical with the nature of the universe at large. While it was characteristic of inanimate objects to have cohesion (*ἕξις*), and of plants to have growth-power (*φύσις*), and of animals to have soul (*ψυχή*), the distinguishing characteristic of man is that he shares also in the Divine Logos. What man ought to do, therefore, is determined by what he is—he must live according to reason, 'the god within him'. By so doing, he lives 'according to nature' —not in Rousseau's sense, but according to the spirit that animates the world. The mere fact that man is a member of a family, of a community, and of the world-commonwealth, indicates that if he lives according to nature he will do his duty to his kith and kin, engage in social service, and recognize his obligations to mankind. Thus to live according to nature is goodness, for by so doing a man fulfils his function well and is a good man, just as a tool that performs its function well is a good tool. Thus the central ethical principle of Stoicism is that nothing but moral goodness is good, and nothing but moral badness is bad. Health, wealth, high rank, social distinction, pleasure, are not really 'goods'; sickness, poverty, low estate, adversity are not

[1] G. H. Rendall, *Marcus Aurelius*, p. lxv. [2] Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, II. xiv.

really 'evils'—the former may be desirable (*προηγμένα*), and the latter undesirable (*ἀποπροηγμένα*), but they are not 'good' and 'evil'. What a man *is*, is the only thing that matters. No disaster can harm him; for nothing can make him bad but himself. Zeno finds the proof of all this in the fact that history never praises a man because he was healthy, or long-lived, or enjoyed himself a great deal. History praises men only for their great deeds, for their virtue and heroism. Thus Stoic philosophy was essentially ethics, and its aim was to give a new meaning to life and counsel for the right conduct of life. The Stoic was emancipated from fear. Believing (as Socrates said) 'that no evil can befall a good man either while he lives or after he is dead',[1] he faced disease, disaster and death itself with indifference. No less was he set free from mundane desires. Recognizing that nothing was really worth having but virtue, he was weaned from the passion for that worldly prosperity or fame on which men are prone to set their hearts. Nothing could disturb his calm. We are told that Posidonius of Rhodes, while suffering from a painful disease, received a visit from Pompey. At every fresh spasm he cried out, 'Do your worst, pain, do your worst, you will never compel me to acknowledge you are an evil.'[2] The Stoic rigorously guarded himself from any emotional disturbance. He would serve men, but not love them. He would help fellow-creatures in distress, but he felt no sympathy for them. He might sigh with the bereaved, but not from the heart—love, sympathy and pity destroyed tranquillity, and for nobody and nothing would the Stoic sacrifice his eternal calm. Perhaps the most genial feature of Stoicism was its cosmopolitanism. The Stoic regarded every soul as a part of the divine, and so all men were sons of God, all brothers, and there was no essential difference between high and lowly, between master and slave, or between men of different nationality and race. It was, therefore, part of the Stoic's duty to engage in beneficent activity to lighten the lot of mankind.

Such, in broad outline, was Zeno's philosophy. When he died

[1] Plato's *Apology*, ch. xxxiii. [2] E. Bevan, *Stoics and Sceptics*, p. 29.

(264 B.C.), he was succeeded in the headship of the School by Cleanthes of Assos, from whose 'Hymn to Zeus' St. Paul, in his speech on Mars' Hill, quoted the words, 'For we are also his offspring'. On the death of Cleanthes (232 B.C.), Chrysippus of Soli took charge of the School, and writing prolifically, reduced Stoicism to its final and unalterable form. These were the men who shaped the Stoic system, which endured for centuries, and was the dominant school of philosophy in early Imperial times. The success of Stoicism was due to the strength and earnestness of its moral teaching and to its insistence that virtue was the chief good. The movement spread to the great cities of Egypt and Asia Minor (Tarsus especially), and through Panaetius and Posidonius of Rhodes it began, about 100 B.C., to influence the Roman nobility. There was much in Stoicism that was peculiarly congenial to the Roman temper, namely, the firmness and austerity of its code; its emphasis on duty for duty's sake; its stern repression of emotional considerations; and its conception of virtue as manliness. Then, too, just as the conquests of Alexander widened the outlook of the Greeks, so Roman conquests made Rome no longer a city but an empire, and thus prepared the minds of many for the cosmopolitan emphasis of Stoicism. In the first two centuries of our era there arose in Roman circles a series of popular teachers of Stoicism, notably Attalus, Cornutus, Musonius, and most important of all, Seneca, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, who, taking for granted the fundamental doctrines of Stoicism, made it their business to apply them to life.

(*b*) The Chief Roman Stoics

The earliest of this trio was Seneca (4 B.C.–A.D. 65), He was the son of Annaeus Seneca, and was born in Spain. One of his two brothers, Gallio, was pro-consul of Achaia about the middle of the first century (Acts xviii. 12). Seneca became enamoured of Stoic philosophy through the teaching of Attalus. After practising

as an advocate for some years, he incurred the enmity of Messalina, the wife of Claudius, and was banished to Corsica (A.D. 41). In A.D. 49 Agrippina procured his recall to be the tutor of her son Nero, then a boy of twelve. On Nero's accession, he became imperial minister. By inheritance from his father and by imperial favour, Seneca acquired enormous wealth, and so is hardly an example of Stoic austerity. Suspected of being involved in the conspiracy of Calpurnius Piso, he fell from favour and committed suicide by opening his veins. Suetonius says Nero 'drove his tutor Seneca to suicide, although when the old man often pleaded to be allowed to retire and offered to give up his estates, he had sworn most solemnly that he did wrong to suspect him, and that he would rather die than harm him.'[1] That Seneca was genuinely devoted to virtue is beyond question, but as Nero's favourite he was often driven by considerations of expediency to compromise his Stoic principles.

Seneca was the first exponent of Roman Stoicism. The Stoic system he adopted almost in its entirety. He was scientific enough not to return to the exclusive materialism of the old Stoics. They held that Reason itself was a material substance, but he insisted on its incorporeality. While in true Stoic fashion he regarded the relation of the soul to man as corresponding to God's relation to the world, he so opposed soul and body, regarding the body as the prison-house from which the soul is eager to escape, or as the adversary with which the soul is in perpetual conflict, that it seems probable that he regarded the soul not as an exhalation from the body, but as incorporeal. He thought of God, 'as a material air-current which permeates every part of the universe, and is the ultimate source of every variety of life and movement. . . . Nature, Fate and Fortune are merely different names for God, corresponding to the various manifestations of His power.'[2] He held fast by the Conflagration idea. The Fire seizes the world and changes everything into itself—Heracles, weary of his labours, setting himself on fire, illustrates the world. For Seneca,

[1] *Nero* xxxv. [2] *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, II, p. 385.

this Conflagration was a teleological process, for when God has decided to begin a better world, the Conflagration takes place.

But while Seneca valued Stoic 'physics' as something that 'elevated the mind by confronting it with the majesty of truth', he recognized that it played no part in the formation of character, and for him true philosophy was the pursuit of virtue.

Like every true Stoic he regarded virtue as the supreme good, superior far to any gift of Fortune. 'None of the things reputed to be goods or ills appear to the wise man as they do to men at large . . . he does not walk with the crowd, but as the planets make their way against the whirl of heaven, so he proceeds contrary to the opinion of the world.'[1] 'Men do not care how nobly they live, but only how long, although it is within the reach of every man to live nobly, but within no man's power to live long.'[2] 'The wise man is self-sufficient—for a happy existence he needs only a sound and upright soul, one that despises fortune.'[3] Seneca maintained that 'what the gods lack cannot be good',—and they lack all that the unwise desire; he believed that the gods and man have only will and reason in common; and that everything not in our power has nothing to do with our happiness.

Like every Stoic, too, he regarded the world as governed by a good Providence. He believed that even natural disasters were ordained by Providence and fulfil a divine purpose hidden from us by our limited knowledge. 'A wise man escapes necessity because he wills to do what necessity is about to force upon him.'[4] 'That which is bound to be a necessity if you rebel, is not a necessity if you desire it.'[5] 'No evil can befall a good man.'[6] 'Not what you endure, but how you endure it is important.'[7] That apparent evils are really good for us, he seeks to prove by appealing to analogies supplied by surgery, sport, and war. 'Everything proceeds according to law that is fixed and enacted for all time. Fate guides us, and it was settled at the first hour of

[1] *De Constantia Sapientis*, xiv. 4.
[2] *Ep.*, xxii. 7.
[3] *Ep.* ix. 13.
[4] *Ep.* liv. 7.
[5] *Ep.* lxi. 3.
[6] *De Prov.* ii. 1.
[7] *Ibid.*. ii. 5.

birth what length of time remains for each.'[1] 'What, then, is the part of a good man?' 'To offer himself to fate.'[2]

He was just as rigorous as the rest of the Stoics in his repression of the emotions. He will not allow anger in any circumstances, and denies that anger under the control of reason is really anger. 'My father is being murdered—I will defend him; he is slain—I will avenge him, not because I grieve, but because it is my duty.'[3] 'The supreme good is a soul insensible to feeling.'[4] Even in friendship there is to be no warmth. 'The wise man desires friends if only for the purpose of practising friendship, in order that his noble qualities may not lie dormant.'[5] 'Pity is a weakness of the mind that is over-much perturbed by suffering, and if any one requires it from a wise man, that is very much like requiring him to wail and moan at the funerals of strangers.'[6] The wise man will not allow himself to be upset by the wrong-doing of others; to the offender he will say, 'Do what you will, you are too puny to disturb my serenity. Reason, to whom I have committed the guidance of my life, forbids it.'[7] 'There is no surer proof of greatness than to be in a state where nothing can happen to disturb you.'[8]

The oustanding feature of Seneca was his humaneness. 'Man is a social creature begotten for the common good,'[9] so that to live according to nature is to engage in the service of humanity. His attitude towards slaves was worthy of a Christian. He insisted that slaves were not really slaves, but men, comrades, friends. 'Kindly remember that he whom you call your slave sprang from the same stock, is smiled upon by the same skies, and on equal terms with yourself, breathes, lives, and dies'[10]—a plea that reminds us of Job's declaration that in his dealings with his servants he was ever mindful that the God who had made him in the womb, had made them too,[11] or of Shylock's pathetic plea for the Jewish race in *The Merchant of Venice*, III. 1. At

[1] *De Prov.*, v. 7.
[2] *Ibid.*, v. 8.
[3] *De Ira* I. xii. 3.
[4] *Ep.* ix. 1.
[5] *Ep.* ix. 8.
[6] *De Clem.* vi. 4.
[7] *De Ira* III. xxv. 4.
[8] *De Ira* III. vi. 1.
[9] *De Clem.* III. 2.
[10] *Ep.* xlvii. 10.
[11] Job xxxi. 15.

certain points, his teaching somewhat resembles that of the Sermon on the Mount, for he insists that a man should not seek to be even with his adversary. 'It is a petty and sorry person who will bite back when he is bitten. Mice and ants, if you bring your hand near to them, do turn on you.'[1] 'To injure any man is a crime, for he is your fellow-citizen in the greater commonwealth. What if the hands should desire to harm the feet, or the eyes the hands? As all the members of the body are in harmony with one another because it is to the advantage of the whole that the individual members should be unharmed, so mankind should spare the individual man, because all are born for a life of fellowship.'[2] Even our judgment of the faults of others is to be tempered by the remembrance of the grievous faults common to mankind. 'Human nature begets hearts that are deceitful, that are ungrateful, that are covetous, that are undutiful. When you are about to pass judgment on one single man's character, reflect upon the general mass.'[3] 'You had better withdraw into a crowd in order to get away from yourself. Alone, you are too close to a rascal.'[4] 'Soon we shall spew forth this frail spirit. Meanwhile so long as we draw breath, so long as we live among men, let us cherish humanity.'[5]

It is a well-known fact that the Stoics, in certain circumstances, counselled suicide. When, for any reason, life had become well nigh intolerable, that was regarded as a divine hint to be quit of it. Seneca condemns too hasty resort to suicide. 'He who dies just because he is in pain is a weakling, a coward,' but he adds 'he who lives merely to brave out his pain is a fool.'[6] 'If the soul is sick and because of its own imperfection unhappy, a man may end his sorrows and at the same time himself'—he may leap from a precipice or plunge into the sea or cut his throat or open a vein and thus find liberty.[7]

And what about after death? Here his views are contradictory.

[1] *De Ira* II. xxxiv. 1. [2] *De Ira* II. xxxi. 7. [3] *De Ira* II. xxxi. 5.
[4] *Ep.* xxv. 7. [5] *De Ira* III. xliii. 5. [6] *Ep.* lviii. 36.
[7] *De Ira* III. xv. 4.

At times he suggests that the soul is immortal until the Conflagration, when it shares in the general effacement, by being absorbed into the fiery essence whence it came. At other times, he implies that death is extinction. 'We receive what is perishable and shall ourselves perish. Why, therefore, do we chafe? Why complain?'[1] 'In death there is nothing harmful . . . for when we exist, death is not present to us; when death is present, we do not exist.'[2]

The next great Stoic teacher was Epictetus (A.D. 50–130). He was a native of Hierapolis, in Phrygia, the son of a slave woman and himself a slave—in the household of Epaphroditus, Nero's secretary. His master, recognizing his talents, gave him a good education and sent him to study under Musonius. After being set free, he became a teacher himself, and young men from all parts of the Empire flocked to hear him. When Domitian banished all philosophers from Rome, Epictetus took refuge at Nicopolis in Epirus, where he went on with his teaching to the end of his days. He was lame and of feeble health. He remained unmarried until his old age, when he took to himself a wife that he might care for a little child whose parents—friends of his—were about to expose it. He was more or less indifferent to literature (though he valued Plato and Xenophon, because they supplied him with information about Socrates, to whom he constantly appealed). He had absorbed Stoic 'physics', but said little about it. He was purely a moral teacher. He wrote nothing for publication, and his teaching, so far as it has survived, was preserved by his faithful pupil, Arrian, in four books of Discourses (*Διατριβάι*), and the Handbook (*Ἐγχειρίδιον*). Arrian appears to have preserved the *ipsissima verba* of his master, who was a particularly pungent speaker. Epictetus' experience as a slave was probably responsible for his passion for freedom and independence, and his Phrygian origin in part explains the intensity of his conception of the Deity.

Again and again, he declares that every man is responsible for the good or evil that befalls him; for there is no good but moral

[1] *De Prov.* V. 7. [2] *Ep.* xxxvi. 10.

good, and no evil but moral evil, and all external things are matters of indifference. Every man is free to seek virtue if he will, for man has no quality more sovereign than moral choice, and no man is without innate concepts of what is good and evil, honourable and base. Virtue consists in attention to social duties. Nature has placed us in relations to other persons—parents, brothers, children, kinsmen, friends, fellow-citizens, mankind, and under the guidance of reason faithfully to discharge our obligations in these relations is the whole duty of man. 'Some things are under our control, while others are not under our control. Under our control are conception, choice, desire, aversion, and, in a word, everything that is our own doing; not under our control are our body, our property, reputation, office, and, in a word, everything that is not our own doing.'[1] 'Everything outside moral purpose (e.g., bereavement, sickness, ill-treatment, death) is nothing.'[2] 'No man has power to procure me good or to involve me in evil.'[3] 'Even health is a good thing only in a good man.' 'To be well for a good end, is good; to be well for an evil end, is evil.'[4] Epictetus sees in the true Stoic 'the ideal athlete of righteousness, ready and clean and strong, who, having disciplined all passion and desire, and attained the perfect freedom of the will in harmony with the divine, is able to renounce the allurements of ambition, the distractions of wealth and the pre-occupations of married or domestic life, and so to move among his fellows in fearless isolation, as God's commissioned messenger for the service and conversion of men, privileged, through blameless transparency of life, to become father and brother and friend to the whole family of mankind.'[5]

Epictetus insists that the good man is sustained by the sense of the nearness of God. 'When you have shut your doors, and have made all dark within, remember never to say you are alone, for you are not; but God is within, and so is your angel (δαίμων); and what need of light have these to see what you do? To this

[1] *Encheiridion* I. 1. [2] *Discourses* III. iii. 15. [3] *Discourses* IV. xii. 8.
[4] *Discourses* III. xx. 4. [5] G. R. Rendall, *op. cit.*, xxxvii. f.

God you also ought to swear allegiance, as soldiers do to Caesar.'[1] In view of such a demonstration of piety, coupled with such devotion to virtue, it is hardly surprising that in Justinian's time the works of Epictetus—with a few verbal changes—were published as a 'Textbook for Christian morality'.[2] But the spiritual value of the passage just quoted is somewhat diminished when one reflects on Epictetus' conception of God. His theology was an incredible mixture of theism, pantheism and polytheism, and his God was a subtle form of matter pervading the grosser physical elements, and sometimes even the personification of the soul's desire.[3]

So strong was Epictetus' belief in a Providence that orders all things, that religion for him was willing acceptance of the inevitable (ἑκόντα δέχεσθαι τὰ ἀναγκαῖα), and his motto was 'Endure and renounce' (ἀνέχου καὶ ἀπέχου). When he speaks of man as reconciling his will to the will of God, what he means is not that man should actively do the will of God, but that he should passively recognize that every event is necessary and reasonable, for the best interest of the whole. Like Seneca, he insisted that events which seemed to be evil were really good, because they provided an opportunity for the exercise of patience and self-control.[4] Nothing took place by chance. He maintained that the universe was no more governed by chance than a city or a household, and that just as all objects had an artificer and had not been constructed at random, so the universe had its artificer.[5]

In Epictetus, the repression of the emotional life is carried to extremes. A man should do his duty by wife and child, but apparently he must not love them. 'If you love an earthen jar, then think, *I love an earthen jar*, for so shall you not be troubled when it breaks. And when you kiss your little child or wife, think, *I kiss a mortal*; and so shall you not be troubled when they die.'[6] The wise man is to allow no event to disturb his calm by grief or

[1] *Discourses* I. xiv. 13. [2] Paul Barth, *Die Stoa*, p. 182.
[3] W. A. Oldfather, *Epictetus* (Loeb Classical Library), p. xxiv. [4] *Discourses* III. xx. 11.
[5] *Discourses* II. xiv. 26; I. vi. 7. [6] *Encheiridion*, ch. 3

anger. 'Never say about anything, "I have lost it", but only, "I have given it back." Is your child dead? It has been given back. Is your wife dead? She has been given back. "I have had my farm taken away." Very well, this too has been given back. "Yet it was a rascal who took it away." But what concern is it of yours by whose instrumentality the giver called for its return?'[1] 'You must feel no anger, no rage, no envy, no pity.'[2] 'No bad news should disturb—because it does not fall within the sphere of the moral purpose.'[3]

Though he maintained that happiness came to a man as he fulfilled the rôle appointed to him by God, yet in this happiness there was apparently something wanting, for he made frequent reference to 'the open door', that is, recourse to suicide as a way out when life became insupportable. He denied the existence of any evil other than moral evil, and yet recognized that even the good man might find life so difficult that it was best for him to depart. 'When God provides the necessities no longer,' he says, 'He sounds the recall, opens the door and says "Go". Where? To what you came from, the physical elements.' 'Doth it smoke in the chamber? If it is not very much, I will stay; if too much, I will go out; for remember this always, and hold fast to it, that the door is open. . . . If He give the signal for retreat, as He did to Socrates, we must obey Him as our commander.' For Epictetus death meant extinction.

The greatest of all the Roman Stoics was Marcus Aurelius (121–180), and he was the last whose writings have survived. Lecky says of him that he was "perhaps as nearly a perfectly virtuous man as has ever appeared upon our world.'[4] A Roman cardinal, in the preface to his Italian translation of the *Meditations*, speaks of blushing deeper than his own red habit when he admires the virtues of this heathen.[5] The virtues were undoubtedly there, for Marcus displayed constant anxiety for the good of his people. He sought to realize the conception of a free state in which all

[1] *Encheiridion*, ch. 11. [2] *Discourses* III. xxiii. 3. [3] *Discourses* III. xviii. 1.
[4] *European Morals*, I. p. 249. [5] A. S. L. Farquharson, *Marcus Aurelius*, p. 124.

citizens were equal, and of a royalty which made it its first duty to respect the liberty of the citizens. He endeavoured to ameliorate the lot of mankind. Speaking of Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius, Gibbon says 'their united reigns are possibly the only period of history in which the happiness of a great people was the sole object of government.'[1]

Marcus took over all the main Stoic doctrines including the ideas of Creative Fire and the periodic conflagration and rebirth of the world. He regarded the world of his day as old and exhausted, but destined—through the Conflagration—to renew its youth. He avoided the stark materialism of the early Stoics by distinguishing clearly between the material and the immaterial, and dividing things into material and causal. His Stoicism was tinctured by the milder and more religious spirit of Platonism. He sympathized with all religious cults as witnesses to the divine power—with one exception, Christianity. It was under Marcus Aurelius that Justin Martyr suffered death 'for impiety and atheism' (!) (*ἀσέβεια καὶ ἀθεότης*). He seems to have regarded Christians as fanatics. Speaking of readiness to die, he says that 'it must proceed, not from an obstinate and peremptory resolution of the mind, violently and passionately set upon opposition, as Christians are wont, but from a peculiar judgment, with discretion and gravity.'[2]

Like all Stoics, he was convinced that Divine Reason governed the world for the good of the whole, and he attributed all criticism of the world as due to the ignorance of the Part concerning the purpose of the Whole. He regarded the whole world as a miracle depending upon an Unseen Power, an Omnipresent Deity. For him, the soul of man was a particle of Zeus, 'the God within', and it fulfilled its function when it practised virtue by discharging its duties and obligations to mankind. Much that he teaches is in accord with Christian belief and the Christian spirit, for he lived in submission to a Power higher than himself, and taught the love of mankind.

[1] *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. I. ch. iii.

[2] *Meditations*, XI. iii.

The spirit of his life is well expressed in the exhortation which he addressed to himself: 'Whilst yet thou livest, whilst thou mayest, be good . . . keep thyself, therefore, truly simple, good, sincere, grave, free from all ostentation, a lover of that which is just, religious, kind, tender-hearted, strong and vigorous to undergo anything that becomes thee . . . worship the gods, procure the welfare of men. Charitable actions and a holy disposition is the only fruit of this earthly life . . . the true joy of a man is to do that which properly belongs to a man. That which is most proper to a man is to be kindly affected towards them that are of the same kind and nature as he is himself; to contemn all sensual notions and appetites.'[1] In a manner reminiscent of the Sermon on the Mount, he was ready to show kindness to those who hated him. 'Will any hate me? Let him look to that. I for my part will be kind and loving to all, and even unto him that hates me, whosoever he be.'[2] He looked for no reward for kindnesses done; 'as a horse after a race, and a hunting dog when he hath hunted, and a bee which hath made her honey, look not for applause and commendation; so neither doth a man that doth rightly understand his own nature, when he hath done a good turn.'[3] He stressed the unity of mankind by pointing out that as an Antonine, his city was Rome; but as a man it was the whole world.[4] He was characterized by great public spirit, and held that man, the crown of nature, differentiated from all other creatures by the gift of reason, should live for the good of society. 'Let this be thy only joy and thy only comfort, from one sociable kind action without intermission to pass unto another, God being ever in thy mind.'[5] He maintained that nothing was really good for the individual that was not good for society as a whole—'that which is not good for the hive, cannot be good for the bee.'[6]

True Stoic that he was, he believed that there was no real good but moral good and no evil but moral evil. Wealth, fame, imperial power and grandeur had no attraction for him; and in

[1] *Meditations*, IV. xiv.; VI. xxvii.; VII. xxv.
[2] *Ibid.*, XI. xii.
[3] *Ibid.*, V. vi.
[4] *Ibid.*, VI. xxxix.
[5] *Ibid.*, VI. vi.
[6] *Ibid.*, VI. xlix.

their opposites he saw no ill. 'There is nothing truly good and beneficial to man but that which makes him just, temperate, courageous, liberal; and there is nothing truly evil and hurtful to man but that which causes the contrary effects.'[1] Consequently he was always prepared meekly to accept the inevitable. As everything was ordered by the Lord and Governor of the universe, all was well, and untoward events were simply opportunities of showing patience and courage. 'Upon all occasions of sorrow remember henceforth to make use of this dogma, that whatsoever it is that has happened to thee, is in very deed of itself no misfortune; but that to bear it generously is certainly great happiness.'[2]

Yet in spite of all this theoretical pantheistic optimism, in actual practice his view of human life was steeped in pessimism of the deepest dye. Again and again he discourses on the theme of the vanity of human life. Time swallows up the noblest and best of men—they all come to stench and refuse at the last.[3] Death is the dissolution of being, it 'bounds our brief span with an Eternity that contains neither hint nor hope nor dread of further conscious being. The bodily element will pass to other uses, earth to earth and dust to dust, while the life-giving Pneuma will join that ethereal or fiery being of which it is a part.' Death is the last word said of the greatest and the least, of Alexander and his stable boy, and equally extinguishes the virtuous and the vicious, the wise man and the fool: 'had it been better otherwise, the gods would have had it so; from its not being so, be assured it ought not to be so.'[4] 'Whatever is expedient unto thee, O World,' he cries, 'is expedient unto me; nothing can either be unseasonable unto me or out of date, which unto thee is seasonable.'[5] He regarded death not simply as the end of sorrows, but as the last great demonstration of the vanity of earthly things. His zeal for virtue remained with him to the end, but his sense of the futility of everything extinguished in him all enthusiasm for life.

[1] *Meditations*, VIII. xxxv. [2] *Ibid.*, IV. xli. [3] *Ibid.*, VIII. xxxv.
[4] G. H. Rendall, *op. cit.*, c. vi. and *Meditations* XII. iv. [5] *Meditations* IV. xix.

(*c*) The Strength and Weakness of Stoicism

Stoicism struck some great notes. It exalted virtue as the supreme end of human life—utterly disinterested virtue, irrespective of all considerations of reward or punishment, of happiness or the reverse. It taught that virtue and virtue only, not race or rank or birth or wealth, made one man superior to another. It proclaimed the fraternity of mankind, and inculcated charity for the human race. It insisted that the good man was a citizen of the whole world, that men were born for the sake of men, and that nature ordained that a man should seek the good of every man, whosoever he might be, for the very reason that he was a man. The end of life was to do one's duty by one's fellow-men.

In view of this emphasis, it is understandable that Stoicism wrought much good. No system of philosophy has borne so much wholesome fruit in the practice of the Western world. It raised up many good rulers who used their influence in the cause of virtue. Under the early Empire all good administrators were imbued with Stoic principles, and all Roman literature from the beginning of the Christian era took these principles for granted. Stoicism nerved 'innumerable men for centuries to brave action and brave endurance in a world where brute force and cruelty had dreadful scope.'[1] It checked extravagance and fostered simplicity. It exercised a profound humanizing influence on Roman jurisprudence, and encouraged masters to be humane in their treatment of their slaves, not to despise them but to regard them as brother-men.

That St. Paul was powerfully influenced by Stoicism is clear from his Epistles. It is highly probable that Stoic ideas, gleaned during his youth at Tarsus, played at least some part in enabling him to see, more quickly than the rest of the Apostles, the full

[1] E. Bevan, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

implications of the Christian faith. His terminology suggests Stoic influence. He makes frequent references to 'conscience' (*συνείδησις*), a great word amongst the Stoics. When he declares that he had learned in whatever state he found himself to be 'content' (Phil. iv. 11), he uses the Stoic word *αὐτάρκης*, 'self-sufficing' though he doubtless invests the term with a Christian and not a Stoic content. When he points out (1 Cor. xi. 14) that 'nature herself teaches us' (*ἡ φύσις αὐτὴ διδάσκει*) he is appealing to a favourite Stoic argument. In his kindly solicitude for the runaway slave, Onesimus, it is likely that Stoic as well as Christian ideas played some part. When he declares (Rom. ii. 14) that Gentiles, though they have no (Jewish) Law, fulfil by natural instinct (*φύσει*) the requirements of the Law, and show the effect of the Law written on their hearts, he reveals his familiarity with the Stoic contention that man possesses an innate moral sense. In his reference to 'heavenly bodies' (1 Cor. xv. 40) he is possibly using Stoic terminology. Most important of all, his acquaintance with the cosmopolitan emphasis of Stoicism at least prepared his mind for the recognition of the universal scope of the Christian Gospel, and made him all the readier to perceive that in Christ the 'wall of partition' (Eph. ii. 14) between Jew and Gentile had been broken down, and both had been made one, that in Christ there was neither Jew nor Greek, neither male nor female, neither bond nor free. Thus Stoicism had some share in the training of the great Apostle of the Gentiles.

Again, it is clear that the Logos Doctrine of the Fourth Gospel owes much to Stoicism, which not only made the 'Logos' central in its creed and practice, but also so popularized the term that the author of the Fourth Gospel used it in his attempt to make Christianity intelligible to the non-Jewish world: 'The Logos became flesh and dwelt among us' (St. John i. 14), though, as Paul Barth points out, 'One must not forget the other sources of this faith.'[1]

Yet whatever the greatness and excellences of Stoicism, time

[1] *Die Stoa*, p. 182.

has shown that it could never become a religion for mankind, for it failed to supply a light by which man could live. The reasons are to be found in the nature of Stoicism itself.

It made an impossible demand on men when it called upon them to deem the untoward events of life as matters of indifference. To regard poverty and pain and disease and the ravages of war and natural calamities as matters of no consequence was as unrealistic as is the claim of modern Christian Science that all the ills to which our flesh is heir are purely fictitious, the fanciful products of mental aberrations. Whatever credit the Stoics deserved for summoning men to face life's troubles with fortitude, they forfeited men's confidence when they insisted that those troubles were a mere bagatelle. Adversity is too real and too serious a problem of human life to be dismissed in that summary fashion.

Further, Stoicism was untrue to human nature. Feeling is as truly part and parcel of human nature as the mind and the will, and consequently the emotional life cannot rightly be suppressed as a mere disease. Excessive emotionalism is reprehensible enough, but the emotions are nevertheless the driving forces of personality, and by seeking to crush them the Stoic in reality undermined the very moral appeals he addressed to men, for he called on men to live for the welfare of others but forbade all care and concern for others. Yet how can any man really live for human welfare if he does not care for human beings? The Stoic advised us to have friends, but not to love them; to practise hospitality, but without warmth; to be magnanimous, but without tenderness; to show clemency, but without sympathy; to assist the sufferer, but without pity. Love, anger, grief, perturbation of any kind, the Stoic eschewed, while he regarded pity as the weakness of a feeble mind that flinches at the sight of suffering. If his child died, he apparently found ample comfort in the thought that he never supposed he had begotten an immortal. If his country was ruined by war, his city captured, his daughters carried off as slaves or concubines, he could boast that he had lost nothing because he

was independent of circumstance, and his moral purpose in life was unaffected by any mere external event. But a man who could be as indifferent as stone in such a situation was a loveless monster. Thus to suppress the emotions was to choke up the chief springs of benevolence. There was something utterly inhuman in Stoic freedom from emotion (ἀπάθεια) and in Stoic calm (ἀταραξία). In spite of all his insistence on the unity of mankind and the duty of service, the Stoic lacked real humaneness. 'The framework or theory of benevolence might be there, but the animating spirit was absent.'[1] Perhaps St. Paul had the Stoic in mind when he wrote: 'If I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned: but have not love, it profiteth me nothing'—he was certainly never further removed from Stoicism than when he penned those words.

There was a serious defect even in the ethical ideal of the Stoic. Stoicism has been described as 'majestic egoism'. But since egoism is the source and spring of all the evils that bedevil the lives of individuals, and devastate social and international life, it is difficult to see how it can ever be 'majestic'. The man who can see his fellow-creatures overwhelmed by suffering and disaster, and yet remain calm, and can coolly assert that he is unaffected thereby, as it has no bearing on the moral purpose of his life, is certainly an egoist, but there is nothing 'majestic' about him. True, the Stoics emphasized the dignity of man, but they sought to evolve their entire system of ethics out of existing human nature, without reference to any external sanction, and regarded virtue as their own achievement, as something acquired by an act of will. Occasionally they acknowledged divine inspiration, but in the main they would have agreed with Cicero's dictum: 'We justly boast of our own virtue, which we could not do if we derived it from the deity and not from ourselves.'[2] The Stoic scheme was humanistic, for man was at the centre, and reverence was concerned with virtue, especially the virtue of great men,

[1] Lecky, *European Morals*, i. p. 192.
[2] *De Natura Deorum*, iii. 36.

rather than with God. The Stoic sought to achieve such a state of soul that with glowing pride he could approve himself. His virtues were somewhat self-consciously erected on the basis of self-respect and self-reliance. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that Stoic ethics exercised so little influence on the masses, for most men realize in bitter experience that they cannot save themselves; that the good they want to do, they cannot practise; and that the evil they want to avoid, they fall into. A correct scientific statement of the rules of virtue, coupled with appeals for mere self-respect and self-reliance, has upon the vast majority of men simply no effect at all.

The Stoic creed was such that the man who embraced it could hardly escape the sense of the futility of life. As Gilbert Murray has pointed out,[1] life for the Stoic was a game played with counters, the counters were worthless, but he must play the game well; he might lose the game, but that was a matter of no consequence, all that mattered was to play the game well. As it were, the Stoic slogan was: 'Do your duty. It all comes to nothing in the end, but never mind, do your duty.' The sense of sadness and futility hangs like a black pall over all the lofty meditations of Marcus Aurelius. The Stoic held that the Universe was designed to realize value, but what that value was, was never defined. In any case, it would eventually be reabsorbed into the Ethereal Fire, and then another world-process would begin only eventually to be reabsorbed, and so on, presumably for ever. The 'purpose', whatever it was, led nowhere. Like modern Ethical Humanism, Stoicism, for all its theoretical optimism, was in reality stark pessimism. Hence the open advocacy of suicide when the trials of life became insupportable, and the frequency of recourse to it among the Stoics. This pessimism was intensified by the Stoic attitude to death. For many Stoics (e.g., Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius) death meant extinction. Even when Stoics believed in some sort of life after death, it was usually only the 'reason' that survived—until the Conflagration. If universal

[1] *Stoic, Christian and Humanist.*

extinction is the final destiny of the human race, it is impossible to escape the conclusion that human life is meaningless and futile, and, for the mass of mankind, hardly worth living at all. If a man believes that all the moral and spiritual endeavours and aspirations of humanity come to nothing in the end, then his profession of optimism is little more than bravado, and in the inmost depths of his being there is the gnawing awareness that 'life is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.'

As a Religion, Stoicism failed because its God was an 'It' and not a 'He'. Stoic pantheism is never more starkly revealed than in Epictetus' teaching about suicide, when he maintains that if circumstances are such that life has become burdensome, *God* is calling us to end it. It is true that Stoics often spoke of God in a personal way—that is notably the case in the hymn of Cleanthes and in many utterances of Seneca and Epictetus who frequently speak of God in terms that would have satisfied Thomas à Kempis. But if the 'holy spirit' in man is simply 'reason', and if 'God' is simply Fate or Destiny or Nature or the Universe or the Ethereal Fire, to speak of them in personal terms is a hollow fiction. When the Stoic calls on us to obey God, he means not that we are to seek to bring our moral will into line with the moral character and purpose of God, but simply that we are to submit with the best possible grace to the stings and stabs of adverse fortune. Thus the very nerve of the moral and spiritual life is cut, for there is no Personal God, all-righteous and all-holy, summoning us to obedient fellowship with Himself. Hence, as Lightfoot says, the dogmas and precepts of Stoicism were barren. 'Its noblest branches bore neither flowers nor fruit, because there was no parent stem from which they could draw fresh sap.'[1] Thus perished the greatest and most successful of all the attempts of man to invent a religion without any appeal to special revelation. The Stoic conception of virtue was, at many points, gravely defective, but in that the Stoics made goodness, as they conceived

[1] *Philippians*, p. 328.

it, the supreme end of life, they revealed that God had not left them entirely without witness to Himself. They were aware of a 'transcendent constraint', but misinterpreted it. They did not recognize that the quest for virtue is the human response to the summons of a personal God Who calls us to obedient fellowship with Himself and by His Spirit enables us to obey.

IV

SCIENTIFIC HUMANISM

Science has nothing to say about values.—BERTRAND RUSSELL, *Religion and Science*, p. 175.

(*a*) 'DISILLUSION WITH THE LABORATORY'

IN these days there are not a few who look to Science rather than to Christianity as a guide to life. It is quite erroneous to suppose, as many do, that the conflict between Religion and Science has now been resolved. There are still men of science who stoutly maintain that all knowledge is scientific knowledge and that we *know* nothing at all but the things that can be learned by laboratory methods. In other words, they recognize only positive facts and observable phenomena, together with their objective relations and the laws which determine them. Bertrand Russell, for example, says bluntly: 'Whatever knowledge is attainable, must be attained by scientific methods; and what science cannot discover, mankind cannot know.'[1] There are many people, too, who are not scientists, but who are so enamoured of scientific method that they are disinclined to believe anything that cannot be proved, as they say, 'scientifically'. They assume that in the religious realm we have but faith and cannot know, and they prefer to commit themselves only to what they know, in the false confidence that knowledge is solely of the things they see. In this way, what Lippmann has called 'the acids of modernity' have—for many people—corroded the religious beliefs which were once the common possession of the vast majority of men, whether they made open profession of religion or not.

That natural science is rendering great service to mankind in

[1] *Religion and Science*, p. 243.

many practical ways is too obvious to need comment. The fact remains, however, that science cannot meet man's deepest needs. It has no *message* for humanity, no *gospel*, no light by which man can live—as the President of the British Association admitted in his address in September 1949. On all the momentous questions concerning right conduct, the value of human personality, the meaning of human life, and the purpose of the world, it is as silent as the grave. If there were nothing but the hard facts of science on which one could base one's philosophy of life, that philosophy would be a very bleak affair. Such, apparently, is the view of J. W. Krutch when he speaks of the 'disillusion with the laboratory.'[1] 'Science,' he says, 'has always promised us two things not necessarily related—an increase first in our powers, second in our happiness and wisdom, and we have come to realize that it is the first and less important of the two promises which it has kept most abundantly.' But, after all, an increase in our powers is of little avail and may be a curse unless it is accompanied by an increase in our wisdom, and it is precisely at that point that science fails us altogether.

Take, for example, the case of Astronomy. Sir James Jeans maintains that astronomy gives no clue whatsoever to the meaning of life. It cannot help us to decide whether life is the climax toward which the whole creation moves; or a mere accident, an unimportant by-product of natural processes; or a disease of matter in its old age when it has lost its high temperature; or the only reality.[2] It is hardly surprising, therefore, that in the name of astronomy man has sometimes been declared to be a mere parasite infesting the epidermis of one of the meanest of the planets—a devaluation of human personality that is fatal to any exalted view of life. Yet even Bertrand Russell admits: 'There is nothing in the Copernican astronomy to *prove* that we are less important than we naturally suppose ourselves to be, but the dethronement of our planet from its central position suggests to

[1] *The Modern Temper*, p. 51.
[2] *The Universe around us*, p. 344.

the imagination a similar dethronement of its inhabitants.'[1] Similarly, many a physicist assumes that all phenomena arise from electrons and quanta and the like controlled by mathematical formulae; and thus, as Eddington says, he may even conclude that his wife is simply a rather elaborate differential equation, though he will be tactful enough not to obtrude this opinion in the domestic circle.[2] The universe, the physicist assures us, is running down like a clock, and the eventual issue of the entire cosmic process is to be the universal extinction of life and intelligence. Again, while we cannot but admire the technical skill and erudition of the scientists who have found out how to release the energy of the atom, nobody seems to be particularly elated by this amazing discovery—for it may mean simply that the human race now knows how to commit suicide by the dissolution of the planet. If, as is sometimes said, this is Nature's '*ultimate* secret', one is tempted to reply—So much the worse for Nature. There are chemists, too, who naïvely assume that man is just a bag of salts with a little water, or just about five shillings' worth of fat and phosphorous; and who foolishly suppose that matter by chemical action produces the mind or soul, so that all the activities of a human being are in the last analysis comparable to the chemical changes that take place in test-tubes. Thus Bertrand Russell affirms: 'The work which has been done in embryology, in bio-chemistry, and in the artificial production of organic compounds, makes it more and more probable that the characteristics of living matter are wholly explicable in terms of chemistry and physics.'[3] One is therefore constrained to ask him: Is philosophy, then, a mere chemical product? Nor is the position any better when we enter the realm of biology. Biology may suggest that man is a little higher than the brutes, but it offers no support for the view that he is a little lower than the angels—for biology, of course, there are no angels! Many biologists deny that there is any purpose at all in the evolutionary process. Sir Arthur

[1] *The Universe Around Us*, p. 24. [2] *The Nature of the Physical World*, p. 341.
[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 125.

Keith asserts[1] that there is purpose but it is an unconscious purpose (whatever that may be). And what is this unconscious purpose? He says that the end Nature has in view is to produce evolutionary units in the form of separate tribes or nations, the members of each tribe or nation being co-operative and public-spirited in their dealings with one another, but suspicious of and on the defensive against the members of all other tribes or nations. To judge from the state of the world to-day, something like that seems to be (at present) the result of the evolutionary process, but if that is its sole purpose, conscious or unconscious, one is constrained to ask: Why should there be such an evolutionary process at all? If Sir Arthur Keith's theory is correct, Bertrand Russell rightly says: 'From evolution, so far as our present knowledge shows, no ultimately optimistic philosophy can be validly inferred.'[2]

If this is a fair summary of what natural science has to say, it is clear that it has no contribution to make to the interpretation and conduct of life. It does not in any way add to our happiness or our wisdom. As E. L. Woodward said in a broadcast (24th March 1946), on the Crisis of Civilization: 'We are in confusion . . . because the scientific method is the best instrument which our intellect has devised, and yet we also know that the results obtained by this instrument do not make sense. . . . Somewhere we have missed the point.' Precisely. We are wont to react to some of the scientific theories of the twentieth century as Wordsworth reacted to those of the eighteenth and nineteenth. What moved him (and what moves us) was not intellectual antagonism but moral revulsion, the feeling of something left out, and that something comprises everything that is most important. In a great passage at the end of his *Varieties of Religious Experience* William James said: 'The whole drift of my education goes to persuade me that the world of our present consciousness is only one out of many worlds of consciousness that exist, and that those other worlds must contain experiences which have a meaning for our

[1] *Sunday Times*, 24th March 1946. [2] *Op. cit.*, p. 81.

life also. . . . By being faithful in my poor measure to this over-belief, I seem to keep myself more sane and true. I *can*, of course, put myself into the sectarian scientist's attitude, and imagine vividly that the world of sensations and scientific laws and objects may be all. But whenever I do this, I hear that inward monitor, of which W. K. Clifford once wrote, whispering the word "bosh". Humbug is humbug, even though it bear the scientific name, and the total expression of human experience, as I view it objectively, invincibly urges me beyond the narrow "scientific" bounds.'[1]

The fundamental fallacy of this scientific secularism is the notion that all knowledge is scientific knowledge, in which case we have no knowledge of those imponderables which alone can make life worth living—such things as beauty and goodness and love and ethical and religious experience, and all that we mean by personality. It is sheer arrogance to assume that anything that cannot be seen or heard or touched or weighed or measured lies outside the realm of reality. As A. E. Taylor has pointed out, when anything is known there is a triple pre-supposition: (1) that about which something is known; (2) the person who knows this something; and (3) the knowing of it. 'The last two factors cannot rightly be left out of account. It may be that if the astronomer, who has swept the heavens with his telescope and found no God, had taken into account not only the heavens but himself and his searching, he would have found the evidence that is missing.'[2] That second point, 'the person who knows this something', is extremely important. When scientific theories are used to devaluate man, the theories themselves are largely undermined. If it be true that man is nothing more than a parasite, a sort of louse, what value can be attached to his astronomy? If man's astronomy is sound, he himself must be rather more than a louse! If man is a mere superior kind of ape, what reliance can be placed on his simian biology? If man is himself a mere chemical compound, his chemical theories are suspect. The plain truth is

[1] P. 519 [2] *Does God exist?*, p. 34.

that science of necessity exalts man—it is man who has measured the vast distances between the stars, ascertained their size, their weight, their temperature, their chemical composition, and resolved the complexity of their movements. It is man who has deciphered the history of the earth's crust, written the story of the forward march of life, and discovered the few elements of which the myriad things about us are made. Science is one of the greatest achievements of the human mind, and if science is great and significant, Man, its Author, must be greater and more significant still.

In the broadcast referred to above, E. L. Woodward pointed out: 'There seem to be two kinds of knowledge, of which one kind can be accurately measured, and the other kind defies measurement, but has to be considered in terms of the beliefs of the wisest men over many centuries, beliefs which point to the affirmation of the religious view of the universe.' Or, as Dr. Soal remarks: 'Man, the highest living organism, has means of ascertaining truth which are quite as valid, in the belief of men like Schrödinger and Einstein, as the methods of science. . . . Schrödinger writes: "In the new universe, it appears, our religious insight is granted as great validity as our scientific insight." '[1]

The great achievements of science are justly praised, and we resist or ignore scientific facts at our peril. But science does not and cannot give a complete view of reality, and its account of reality is as different from reality itself as an accurately drawn map of England is different from England. Science, we are told, is measurement. If that is so, the most valuable things in human life lie in a realm where the writ of science does not run, for they cannot be measured. It is doubtless true, as Bertrand Russell affirms, that science 'cannot prove such propositions as "it is better to love than to hate", or "Kindness is better than cruelty",'[2] but one cannot doubt the truth of these propositions, so that there is something here that we know by other than scientific means.

[1] *Hibbert Journal*, April 1950, p. 239. [2] *Op. cit.*, p. 176.

O world, thou choosest not the better part,
It is not wisdom to be only wise,
And on the inward vision close the eyes,
But it is wisdom to believe the heart.
Columbus found a world, but had no chart
Save one that faith deciphered in the skies;
To trust the soul's invincible surmise
Was all his science and his only art.
Our knowledge is a torch of smoky pine,
That lights the pathway but one step ahead,
Across a void of mystery and dread.
Bid then the tender lights of faith to shine,
By which alone the mortal heart is led
Unto the thinking of the thought divine.[1]

When science has taught us all it can about the world in which we live, and done all it can to improve conditions, it still remains true that 'the fact of religious vision and its history of persistent expansion, is our one ground for optimism. Apart from it, human life is a flash of occasional enjoyment, lighting up a mass of pain and misery, a bagatelle of transient experience.'[2]

(*b*) 'Scientific' Religion

There are some scientific men who seem to realize all this and are making attempts to rescue moral and spiritual values (which they admit to be essential to human life) from the destruction with which a purely scientific view of the world threatens them. Thus they seek to establish ethics and a religion of some sort on a purely scientific basis. They seek to combine ethical optimism and cosmic pessimism—two things which unite as harmoniously as fire and water. Julian Huxley, for example, inspired by Morley's remark that 'the next great task of science will be to create a religion for humanity' has attempted to invent a scientific

[1] George Santayana. (*Poems*, 3rd sonnet. Quoted by permission of the publisher, Constable & Company Ltd.) [2] A. N. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, p. 238.

religion[1] He regards religion as a biological problem—not a very promising start! He finds the essence of religion in the sense of sacredness and claims that what is apprehended by the religious consciousness is 'the Eternal Power which is outside man, Power possibly in part spiritual, certainly in all its most obvious aspects material.' This sacred object of religion he declares to be the sum total of the permanent facts of human experience, the facts of the spiritual life, and the facts and forces of nature apart from man. This is a sort of scientific pantheism, and if everything is sacred, nothing is peculiarly sacred. He frankly confesses that he has no idea how this new scientific religion can be propagated. Probably the only inference that most men would draw from those who proclaimed it would be that the religious emotion is a very fitful and elusive thing, and that the sense of sacredness is an illusion. Certain it is that if religion existed in no other form, it would speedily vanish from the earth. Science cannot provide man with a religion. As C. E. M. Joad suggests, it may have 'cleared the boards of the universe for religion, but it has no contribution to make to the writing of the play.'[2] Or in the words of A. E. Taylor: 'Once you exclude man's moral life from the conception of the "nature" to which you make your appeal, all that "nature" will witness to will be an "author" of superhuman power and ingenuity, whose purposes, if He has any, are quite inscrutable and may be iniquitous.'[3]

(*c*) 'Scientific' Ethics

Equally futile is Huxley's attempt to find a biological basis for ethics. He takes as his starting point the lecture delivered by his grandfather, T. H. Huxley, in 1893, on the contradiction between ethics and the cosmic process. The grandfather contended that ethical nature, while born of cosmic nature, was necessarily at

[1] See his book: *Religion without Revelation*, passim.
[2] *Guide to Modern Thought*, p. 107. [3] *Op. cit.*, p. 16.

enmity with its parent, and that man's greatest problem was to find the mean between the self-restraint required by ethics and the brutal and almost boundless self-assertion which characterizes the cosmic process—otherwise, the internecine struggle for existence, the competition of each with all, which is the outstanding feature of evolution, would invade human society and militate fatally against human welfare. Julian Huxley, in his lecture of 1943, claimed to be able to resolve that contradiction. It is possible, he maintained, now for man to 'inject his ethic into the heart of evolution.'[1] But clearly when he speaks of 'evolution' here he is not thinking of the cosmic process with which his grandfather dealt—man cannot inject his ethics into that! He is using the term 'evolution' in an entirely different sense—he means the future evolution of human society.[2]

And what is the nature of the ethics to be injected into the evolution of human society? The idea that there is any 'transcendent constraint' in ethical experience is, of course, ignored. Huxley gives a highly speculative account of the moral development of a child, as a result of which it acquires what he calls a psychological mechanism by which it is able to attach its labels of 'right' and 'wrong' to things. But the truth seems rather to be —in the main—not that we attach our labels of 'right' and 'wrong' to things, but come to recognize that the labels are already attached. We do not make just what we please 'right' or 'wrong', but come to recognize that certain things are 'right' and nothing that we think or feel or do can ever make them 'wrong'; and that certain things are 'wrong' and that nothing we think or feel or do can ever make them 'right'. Moral truth is not a 'product of evolution, and itself evolving'. It is just as ojective as mathematical truth or scientific truth, and it is man's power to apprehend it that evolves.

Even less satisfactory is Huxley's treatment of the sense of moral

[1] *Evolutionary Ethics*, p. 70.

[2] Dean Matthews justly complains of the many senses in which the word evolution is used nowadays by men of Science. Waddington, *Science and Ethics*, p. 128.

obligation. He claims that the absoluteness of moral obligation turns out on analysis 'to be no true absolute, but a result of the nature of our infantile machinery, combined with later rationalization and wish-fulfilment.'[1] Here, surely, what Huxley calls 'modern knowledge' over-reaches itself and trifles with one of the sublimest things in human life. If we leave entirely out of account the great historic examples of those who felt it their duty to risk death or actually to die that they might be true to the witness of their consciences, and just consider the case of an ordinary high-minded man who feels under an absolute moral obligation to be honest even to his own grievous hurt, or to be truthful even to his own serious disadvantage, or to persevere in a difficult, irksome, thankless task; is it an adequate explanation of his conduct to say that he is behaving thus as a result of the nature of his infantile machinery, combined with later rationalization and wish-fulfilment? Such treatment of the high sense of moral obligation is purblind. It is simply impossible thus to dissolve into nothingness that sense of a transcendent claim, of what St. Paul calls 'Necessity laid upon me', which is inseparable from ethical experience at its highest.

As we have seen, Huxley regards ethics as a product of evolution and itself evolving. Then what is it that decides the direction which ethical development is to take? The decisive factor according to him is 'the desirable direction of evolution'.[2] When we have fixed what we regard as the desirable trend for human society, we can fashion our ethics accordingly, and deem 'right' those ethical ideas which favour that trend, and 'wrong' those which do not. But surely 'the desirable direction of evolution' is a matter of opinion. In that case, the ethics favourable to that trend must, *ipso facto*, become a matter of opinion. Yet it is of the very essence of ethical experience that the great issues of right and wrong are not just matters of opinion. Exploitation and oppression and such distortions as sadistic cruelty, we are assured, will disappear when it is recognized that a state of society in

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 41. [2] *Op. cit.*, p. 43.

which they are found is not desirable![1] Truthfulness and honesty are declared desirable because they are 'intellectual lubricants' of free co-operation.[2] Are we then *not* to be truthful and honest when truthfulness and honesty put sand rather than oil into the machinery of social life? There is apparently to be no sense that a lie is a blot on one's scutcheon and a stain on one's soul.

The way in which evolutionary ethics can effect social changes is illustrated by an appeal to the abolition of slavery. Huxley's argument is that when such a stage in the evolution of human society had been reached that machines were doing the drudgery formerly done by men and free workers had become more efficient than slave labour, then it was possible and expedient to apply the principle of human equality to the moral problem of abolishing slavery. (Domestic slave-labour is here left out of account.) C. H. Waddington gives expression to a similar idea when he says: 'I should suggest that some previously held ethical beliefs such as . . . the acceptance of slavery, have been rejected on the experimentally determined grounds that they do not work out in practice.'[3] This is a singularly unhappy illustration, completely at variance with the historical facts of the case; it is simply an attempt to force a theory invented in the middle of the twentieth century to fit the facts of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The question at issue is of such crucial importance that it requires careful examination. The most authoritative account of the British Anti-Slavery Movement is that of Sir Reginald Coupland, and according to him neither Huxley's nor Waddington's argument played the slightest part. On the contrary, slavery was officially regarded as economically indispensable. Thus when the Quakers presented a petition against slavery in 1783, Lord North replied that he was afraid it would be found impossible to abolish the Slave Trade . . . for it was a trade which had, in some measure, become necessary to almost every nation in Europe; and as it would be next to an impossibility to induce them all to give it up and renounce it for

[1] *Science and Ethics*, p. 48. [2] *Op. cit.*, p. 110. [3] *Op. cit.*, p. 53.

ever, so he was apprehensive that the wishes of the humane petitioners could not be accomplished. Again, if it had become so abundantly clear that the stage of evolution had been reached when it was 'possible and expedient' to abolish slavery, and if it was a patent fact that slavery did not work well in practice, why did it take eighteen years to persuade the British Parliament to abolish the slave trade, and another twenty-six years to bring our legislators to the point of emancipating all slaves in the British Empire? And why did it take another thirty years of agitation and a bloody war to bring about the abolition of slavery in the United States of America? The real cause of the abolition of slavery was the iron determination of men who, under 'transcendent constraint', felt that whether slavery was profitable or unprofitable, necessary or unnecessary from the economic point of view, whether there were machines or no machines, an abundance of free labour or not, the practice of kidnapping the natives of West Africa, carrying them, manacled and packed like poultry, across the Atlantic in ships that were floating hells, and then selling them to toil under the lash for the rest of their lives in the sugar plantations of the West, was such a foul abomination that it must be brought to an end. The literature of the abolition movement proves conclusively that the driving force which carried the movement to success was primarily Christian. The main consideration urged by its protagonists was not that slavery was no longer 'economic' or 'practicable', but that it was an intolerable wrong. Here is one short passage from Wilberforce's first speech on the subject in the House of Commons: 'I confess to you, Sir, so enormous, so dreadful, so irremediable did this wickedness appear, that my own mind was completely made up for abolition. A trade founded in iniquity, and carried on as this was, must be abolished. Let the consequences be what they would, I from this time determined that I would never rest until I had effected abolition. Such enormities as these, having once come within my knowledge, I should not have been faithful to the sight of my eyes, to the use of my senses and my reason, if I had

shrunk from attempting the abolition.'[1] And surely Abraham Lincoln knew something about the reasons for abolition! But he knew nothing about the reasons which Huxley and Waddington give. This is what he said: 'I know that there is a God and that He hates injustice and slavery. I see the storm coming and I know that His hand is in it. If He has a place and a work for me, and I think He has, I believe I am ready. I am nothing, but truth is everything; I know I am right because I know that liberty is right, for Christ teaches it and Christ is God.'[2] The case of the abolition of slavery indicates that social changes of the right sort will come about not as the evolution of society is directed by the desires of men, but as our human future is shaped and fashioned by men under the transcendent constraint of God.

The basic principles of evolutionary ethics are declared to be: 'the intrinsic worth of the individual, the brotherhood of man, and the universal duty of kindness and unselfishness.'[3] Christian people, happily, have been familiar with these principles for two thousand years, but now, at long last, they are part of the ethical gospel of modern science—so we are assured. On these matters, then, Christian ethics and evolutionary ethics are in agreement. But the claim is advanced that evolutionary ethics are superior to Christian ethics in two respects. In the first place, under the Christian dispensation, these principles were 'static', while under the aegis of science they have become 'dynamic'. The meaning of all this is not quite clear. Are we to understand that under the patronage of science these principles themselves will evolve—that the intrinsic worth of the individual will grow greater, the sense of brotherhood deeper, kindness and unselfishness intenser? If that is the idea, where is the evidence? The only other possible interpretation is that under Christianity these principles were not effective, while science can make them ever more fully operative in the life of mankind. We can consider that when the representatives of evolutionary ethics have produced men who make these

[1] R. Coupland, *Wilberforce*, p. 123.
[2] Lord Charnwood, *Abraham Lincoln*, p. 48.
[3] *Evolutionary Ethics*, p. 53.

great principles as dynamic in the life of the world as they were made by such people as St. Francis of Assisi, John Howard, Elizabeth Fry, William Wilberforce, the Earl of Shaftesbury, David Livingstone and Thomas Barnardo. In the second place we are informed that hitherto such principles have been 'grounded in Authority, Absolute, or Revelation', but that now science is able to provide 'the inductive basis' for them. Christianity, as it were, simply affirmed them, while science can 'prove' them. If science can prove them, where is the proof? The biological evolutionary process, which, *ex hypothesi*, is blind, soulless, purposeless, and automatic, supplies no basis for them, let alone a 'proof'. The mere fact that man has been produced by the evolutionary process is of itself no proof of the intrinsic worth of the human individual, for it has produced many things beside man—rats and mice, for example. Further, if the process that produced the human individual is shortly to blot him clean out of existence as though he were of no more value than a frog croaking in a marsh, on a purely evolutionary basis nobody can have any great faith in the intrinsic worth of human life. Again, the mere fact that the evolutionary process has produced many human individuals is of itself no proof that they are brothers, for they may simply regard one another as competitors for the means of subsistence, and all too often they do so—with most unbrotherly results. It is generally agreed that the economic factor is *one* of the causes of war, and, from that point of view, war is simply a jungle-like competition for food and raw materials, and that is a most unbrotherly procedure. Nor does the evolutionary process suggest that kindness and unselfishness are human duties, for all too often the inference that men draw from it is that brutal self-assertion is the high-road to success—and if T. H. Huxley gave a complete and correct account of that process, the inference is reasonable enough. If we use the term 'evolution' in its purely biological sense, there does not seem to be any purely evolutionary basis for the high principles which evolutionary ethics is said to have espoused, and to be able to 'prove'. But what is the

position when by 'evolution' we mean the evolution of society? All that science can then affirm is that the recognition of the intrinsic worth of the human individual, of the brotherhood of man, and of the duties of kindness and unselfishness is absolutely essential if the life of human society on this planet is to be even so much as decent and tolerable. Thus evolutionary ethics can prove that these beliefs are necessary, but it cannot prove that they are valid—it cannot prove that the human individual actually *has* intrinsic worth, or that men *are* brothers, or that everybody *as a matter of fact* is under an obligation to be kind and unselfish. All it can say to men amounts to this: 'If you wish to promote human welfare, you must *believe* that the human individual has intrinsic worth (whether he has or not), that men are brothers (whether they are or not), and that you are in duty bound to be kind and unselfish (whether you really are or not).' C. H. Waddington maintains that the course of evolution 'dictates' these ethical principles. But Professor Dingle justly replies: 'You say the course of evolution dictates them. That to me is simply a dogmatic statement. Consider the following objection to it. It is only within the last one hundred years that we have known of the course of evolution, let alone what it has been. What was "good" for people before that time? They needed guidance as much as we. It seems to me that you must say that they had merely to guess, and that people who were then what we now call "moral" were either so by accident (this takes some believing), or else were guided by something valid other than the course of evolution. If you choose the latter alternative, I should like to ask why that guidance isn't available now, and why it should not take precedence over the course of evolution, particularly as we may always make discoveries showing that the course of evolution is other than we now believe.'[1]

Evolutionary ethics does not and cannot supply an inductive basis for its ethical principles, which are as much articles of pure

[1] *Science and Ethics*, p. 98.

faith as anything in the Athanasian Creed. As. J. V. Langmead Casserly justly remarks: Scientific Humanism 'is based upon an ethical attitude towards man, but it provides no concept or picture of man in terms of which the attitude can be shown convincingly to be obligatory and appropriate.'[1] The truth is, as Loisy maintained, that 'science, with its simple measuring of observable realities is not in itself a support of the moral life.'[2] J. D. Bernal has said the same thing in another way: 'Scientific knowledge is of use to find means for achieving good things, but it has nothing to do with the determination of what is good.'[3] The Christian reply is that if it is absolutely necessary to believe in these high ethical principles, it is no less necessary to believe in that which alone can make these principles valid, that is, to believe all that Jesus of Nazareth taught about God and man and human life. If man is the child of God, there *is* intrinsic worth in human life. If the Fatherhood of God is a reality, men *are* brothers. If it is the supreme duty and privilege of men to prove themselves the true children of their Heavenly Father, there *is a solid eternal basis* for the duties of kindness and unselfishness.

Huxley's ethical argument, in substance (though not in form), amounts to this: 'We must live *as if* the individual had intrinsic worth, we must behave towards others *as if* the brotherhood of man were a fact, we must cultivate kindness and unselfishness *as if* we were under an obligation to do so.' A similar plea was advanced a year or two ago by Arthur Koestler in a broadcast: 'I am not sure whether what the philosophers call "ethical absolutes" exist, but I am sure that we have to act *as if* they existed.'[4] Similarly Joad once wrote: 'Though I may have my doubts as to the immortality, I have none as to the importance, of individuals. Souls are souls even if their life here is transitory, and though they may not be immortal, it is none the less the business of the government to treat them as if they were. The

[1] *Morals and Man in the Social Sciences*, p. 155.
[2] *Times Literary Supplement*, 27th May 1944, p. 258.
[3] *Science and Ethics*, p. 116.
[4] Reported in *The Listener*, 21st March 1946.

announcement of the importance of the individual is, in my view, the greatest gift of Christianity to the world.' But as Dr. Baillie points out, 'we cannot hold to Christian ethical teaching about personality while rejecting its status in reality. You cannot be a Christian in your moral principles and a . . . pagan in your religion.' These 'as if' pleas remind one of the argument of Hans Vaihinger in his *Die Philosophie des 'Abs ob'*: 'We know,' he says, 'that there is no higher spiritual world, but we are bound in the interests of morality, and of an idealism which is essential to life, to live *as if* there were.'[1]

So, then, one of the fundamental differences between the Scientific Humanist and the Christian is this—the Humanist asserts that we have to live *as if* the sense of moral obligation, the transcendent constraint, were real (for an inward necessity makes it part of our thought and indispensable to our life); while the Christian asserts that the sense of obligation, the transcendent constraint, *is* the realest of the real, a link between the life of God and the life of man. As Dean Inge says: 'There is nothing unscientific in the belief in a higher spiritual order, a kingdom of values, of which the natural order known to science is a partial and abstract representation. . . . If the world of values floats like a luminous haze over a real world of measurable and ponderable things, it is a mirage, for the existence of which it is impossible to account.'[2] The highest witness of the human spirit, especially the awareness of the transcendent constraint, cannot be scientifically explained away, and to dismiss it as a thing of no consequence is pure arrogance. For anything that science knows to the contrary, it may be the most significant fact in the life of man.

[1] Quoted by Wobbermin, *Systematische Theologie* II., p. 447.
[2] *Christian Ethics and Modern Problems*, p. 197.

V

RUSSIAN COMMUNISM

The antithesis between trying to save one's own soul by seeking and following God and trying to do one's duty to one's neighbour is therefore wholly false. The two activities are indissoluble.—A. J. TOYNBEE, *Civilization on Trial*, p. 246.

(*a*) THE RISE OF COMMUNISM

IT would be too trite a remark to say that we are living in an age of transition, for that appears to be true of every age, and, as has been wittily suggested, Adam was constantly making that remark to Eve. The fact is that the world is a dynamic and not a static world, so that it never knows tranquillity. But some changes are evolutionary, while others are revolutionary—almost Copernican—in character. Our lot has been cast in a revolutionary age, and we are standing at one of the gravest crises in the history of mankind. In the last analysis, the crisis is not political or economic or military, but moral and spiritual. The root question at issue is none other than the Christian interpretation of life and the Christian conception of the conduct of life. All the woes of this harsh century are due to man's failure to keep within bounds that lust for material power which is one of the commonest and one of the deadliest of the manifestations of the evil that is in the human heart. It is that lust which has led to two world-wars. It is that lust which is responsible for class warfare—the privileged frequently wish to retain all their privileges regardless of the needs of their fellows, and the unprivileged are all too often very concerned about their rights but completely indifferent to their duties. It is that lust which is the cause of all forms of exploitation and profiteering and the frequent demands for wages that are not really earned. These factors so confound the world at the present time, that it has been truly said that the situation before mankind to-day is hopeless unless we can get the superstructure

of our civilization back on to religious foundations—and the prospects of doing so do not seem, at present, to be particularly bright.

The world is still suffering acutely from the aftermath of the Industrial Revolution. That revolution had, of course, its good side, for it brought with it an enormous advance in the scientific technique of production. The rise of machinery not only relieved man of a great deal of drudgery, but also indefinitely increased the possibilities in the way of supplying commodities of all sorts to meet human needs. But the social injustices connected with it were simply appalling. Apart altogether from the unspeakable horrors of the child-labour, which for several decades was associated with it, it brought superabundant wealth to the few and abject squalor to the many. The means of production were owned by one class whose one idea, as a rule, was to secure the maximum private gain; while the actual work was done by another class who were grievously underpaid for their labour. That situation was the matrix in which Communism was formed, for it was the problem thus presented which roused the anger of Karl Marx and which he sought to solve, driven by the same burning hatred of injustice and oppression which animated the greatest of the Hebrew prophets. 'Capital,' he said, 'comes into the world soiled with mire from top to toe, and oozing blood from every pore.'[1] He thereby became the most powerfully influential figure in the Labour Movement throughout the world. He thrust the economic problem into the foreground and dismissed Christianity as a mere device by which labour-slaves were kept in subjection to their masters.

Hence there are literally millions of people to-day who are wholly pre-occupied with economic problems, and who consequently see no value in and feel no need for anything that does not make for an ampler life in the purely economic sense of the term—higher wages, better houses, more leisure, improved conditions of work, and greater educational opportunities (which are

[1] *Capital*, by Karl Marx, Vol. II., p. 843 (Everyman).

all too often prized, not for their cultural value but as a means of rising in the social scale through an increased earning capacity). What our fathers called 'the salvation of the soul' is left out of the picture, and the assumption is that provided man is properly housed and clothed and fed and can enjoy the comforts and amenities which technical science places at his disposal, all his real needs are fully met. Multitudes appear to be convinced that man *can* live by bread alone without any word proceeding from the mouth of God; that livelihood is the paramount issue, in comparison with which what the Gospel calls 'Life' is a thing of no consequence. Hence, in the main, the drift from religion and the many nearly empty churches; hence, too, the prevailing attitude of sullen indifference and here and there of even venomous hostility to the Christian Church.

The world-wide revolt against harsh economic conditions must be deemed not only as justifiable but also as in line with God's will for men. The Church must recognize, too, that she has to some extent provoked the hostility with which she is regarded by many, in that she has so often been disloyal to her Master, faithless to the social implications of her own Gospel, and has failed to champion the oppressed. There has been in the Churches too much piety completely detached from life; too great a tendency to regard Christianity as a private love-affair between the soul and God; and frequently an iceberg-like coldness in regard to social justice. The Christianity of many who professed and called themselves Christians has just fizzled out in public worship and private devotion, without making them more socially-minded and public-spirited as citizens or humaner in their concrete relations with their fellow-men. Such people have fondly imagined that they could love God without proper regard to their duty to their neighbours, and that Christianity was concerned solely with the salvation of their own souls and not at all with their service to the community. As Monod once acidly observed, the difficulty is to get the Church interested in Christianity. Privileged people in the Churches have all too often

clasped their privileges to their bosoms with both their hands, without any brotherly concern or Christ-like compassion or even common regard for the unprivileged; and Christian fellowship has frequently not been powerful enough to break down the walls of partition between the classes inside the Church, let alone making any considerable contribution to a more wholesome social life in the community at large. Further, while the Church has sought to save men from their sins, it has not been enough concerned to save them from their poverty.

Thus, as Maritain suggests, the present hostility to organized religion 'originates chiefly through the fault of a Christian world unfaithful to its own principles . . . it is stamped with the supernatural sign of the great strokes of the sword of God in history, and to get the better of it the Christian must first conquer himself.'[1] Or as that great Free Churchman, Dr. Fairbairn, said: 'Now one main reason why our religion meets with so much neglect and opposition is that it has not prevented, or remedied in a measure men had the right to expect of it, the evils from which man suffers.' The warning issued sixty years ago by a German Protestant Church historian, Sohm, went unheeded: 'Is modern Christianity,' he asked, 'a Christianity which actually condescends to men of low estate, which reaches a hand to them as brothers, and secures and furthers their interests as its own? By this it may be seen whether the Spirit of Christ lives in a man. . . . You will only overcome the power of hate, if you are yourself overcome by the love of God through Christ.'[2]

If proof were needed that these strictures are valid, it is to be found in the fact that the hatred of the Christian Church is most virulent in the very country where the Church has proved most faithless to her mission. In the Russian Orthodox Church, true Christianity was almost swallowed up and lost in a gorgeous ritual, and the more ritualistic the Church becomes, the more blind she is, as a rule, to the ethical and social implications of her

[1] Maritain, *True Humanism*, pp. 33 and 285.
[2] Quoted by H. G. Wood, *Christianity and Civilization*, pp. 122 ff.

Gospel. In that connection it is surely significant that it is in what are mainly Protestant and Puritan countries—the British Empire, the United States of America and Scandinavia—that hatred of the Christian Church is at its minimum and public life has been most strongly influenced by Christian ideas and ideals. Further, the Russian Orthodox Church was closely allied with the cruel arbitrariness and oppressiveness of the old Czarist régime—'a tyranny,' said Amiel, 'such as the world has never known, silent as darkness, rigid as ice, insensible as bronze, decked with an outer amiability and glittering with the cold brilliancy of snow—a slavery without compensation or relief.'[1] Hence it has come about that while Socialism is a powerful movement in almost every land (and, of course, Socialism and Christianity can and often do go together), yet Socialism in what has been called its 'Calvinistic and fundamentalist' form, Communism, finds its stronghold and headquarters in Russia.

Communism has been variously estimated. Dean Inge once spoke of it as 'an ugly brat likely to destroy its parents.' But it has also been declared by Middleton Murry to be 'the one living religion in the Western world to-day.'[2] It is a 'religion', of course, only in the sense that it satisfies, after a fashion, some of the deepest religious needs of man. It inspires men with the hope of a better world than this, though the better world of the Communist is a purely earthly, material paradise. It supplies men with a great cause for which to live, and so gives point and purpose to life, a cause which men can serve with extraordinary loyalty and fervid devotion, the cause of human betterment—economically conceived. It kindles in many of its adherents an enthusiasm and readiness for self-sacrifice in some ways comparable to those qualities as inspired by classical Christianity. It opens up the way—so it is believed—to an ideal human society, the Communistic counterpart of what the Christian calls the Kingdom of God on earth. The transformation of Russia, in so far as it has been transformed—for the transformation has serious limits and there is

[1] *Journal*, p. 55. [2] *The Necessity of Communism*, p. 111.

probably as much cruelty and tyranny there as ever there was—is hailed as the proof of the truth of Communistic theory and of the practicability of Communism. This new creed claims to be a complete system of doctrine and life. It regards itself as a sort of new secular religion which renders all other religions superfluous, a religion of atheism, for which dialectical materialism supplies the dogma, and of which egalitarianism is the social and ethical expression.

Mr. Harold Laski, freely acknowledging the part played in the ancient world by Christianity, claimed that Communism had taken over Christianity's rôle in the modern world. He attributed the triumph of Christianity at the beginning of our era to the fact that it appealed to masses of ignorant and poor people who felt bitterly the injustice of the world, and created an atmosphere of hope instead of despair, of effort instead of resignation. He found the main contribution of Christianity to social progress in 'the passionate affirmation of the right of each human being to fulfil his individuality.'[1] He admitted that the early Church elevated the common man and made him feel that he had a significant part to play in the life of the world. Assuming that it was now impossible for any thinking man to embrace the Christian faith, he maintained that the void left by the demise of every form of supernatural religion could be adequately filled by Communism, which (apart from the fact that it had no supernatural basis) corresponded 'pretty exactly to the mental climate in which Christianity became the official religion of the West.'[2]

(*b*) Points of Agreement between Christianity and Communism

It is important to recognize and stress the points on which Christianity and Communism are agreed. As Christians we find nothing wrong with the dialectical interpretation of history, in so

[1] *Faith, Reason and Civilization*, p. 39. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 54.

far as it means that advance in man's social development is achieved 'through the clash and mutual fructification of opposites.' Again, genuine Christians have always stood for revolutionary change, for one of the earliest charges brought against them was that they were turning the world upside down, and the social changes that have been brought about by Christian influence constitute one of the most thrilling chapters in the history of the Christian Church. Even Mr. Laski admits that the Christian who has taken seriously the principles of his faith has always, from the earliest times, been a challenge to the traditional order.[1] Nor has the Christian any objection to raise against the proposal for a radical redistribution of wealth. The Parable of Dives and Lazarus is at least a hint of what the Master thought on the subject, and an early Christian document contains the words: 'If a brother or sister be naked and in lack of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Go in peace, be ye warmed and filled; and yet you give them not the things needful to the body, what doth it profit?'; and the even more caustic comment: 'Go to now, ye rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. . . . Behold the hire of the labourers who mowed your fields, which of you is kept back by fraud, crieth out; and the cries of them that reaped have entered into the ears of the Lord of hosts' —which reminds one of Marx's 'Surplus value' theory—money earned by workers but filched from them by the Capitalist class. There is a sense too in which the Christian desires a 'classless society'. The 'classless society' at which the Communist aims is as impossible of attainment as the moon. Men can never be as much alike as peas in a pod. There are necessarily different types of men, and these different 'types' mean inevitably different 'classes'. There will always be some men with five talents, others with two, and others with only one. There will always be brain-workers and manual-workers, skilled craftsmen and unskilled labourers, managers and managed—and these are obviously 'classes'. What

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 91.

the Christian aims at is not the abolition of classes, but the demolition of the high walls between them. In a truly Christian society there would be a sense of social solidarity based on the recognition that every human being doing honest work that is essential to the general well-being is a person entitled to the regard, consideration and respect of his fellows. Class bitterness would thus be swallowed up in the sense of comradeship between all workers, whether in black coats or in overalls, for all would be regarded as fellow-members of the one social organism, each contributing in his own way to the good of the whole—the miner as well as the doctor, the chimney-sweep as well as the lawyer, the domestic servant as well as the school-mistress. And if that feeling of comradeship were genuine, the grosser inequalities of pay would be rectified. Men would display a new humaneness in their dealings with their fellows and the cruelty of snobbishness would vanish. Equal pay would hardly be the result, even if the slogan, 'From each according to his ability and to each according to his needs', were rigorously applied. For, supposing that ability and needs could be rightly assessed, the variations in ability and in needs would justify variations in monetary rewards. The Christian is in full sympathy, too, with the Communist's protest against all exploitation, and against the tendency so often displayed by capitalists to regard human beings as mere pawns in their own money-making game. The Christian recognizes the rights and the interests and the personal worth of the ordinary man—and sympathizes with the 'under-dog'. The Christian insists that in industry employers and employed should honourably co-operate both in management and profit-sharing, for their own common good and for the good of society as a whole, and that every man should regard his daily labour primarily as public service, and not as a mere means of the maximum private gain. The Christian agrees that no man should live in selfish ease, but that all should labour for the well-being of the community. The Christian agrees that all children should have the same chance, and that an able boy should not be prevented by the poverty of

his parents from developing and exercising his talents. The Christian can fully endorse the Communist policy of ignoring all national and racial distinctions and of welcoming as a comrade and a brother anybody who shares his faith, for the true Church has always been international in outlook. If only the Church as a whole had been faithful to these great principles, all of which are for ever enshrined in the teaching of her Lord, the Communist movement would probably never have arisen. At many vitally important points, then, the Christian and the Communist are agreed. As H. G. Wood has said: 'Marxism itself could only rise in a Christian culture. It does not cease to be the child of Christianity, because it ungratefully and indecently spends its energy in kicking its mother.'

(*c*) Points of Difference

We must now consider some of the points where Christianity and Communism clash, for at these points fundamental problems of life are involved. The Christian cannot possibly agree with Marxian dialectical materialism. Marx took over the idea of 'dialectic' from Hegel, who used the term in two senses. It applied primarily to the process of thought by which contradictories are seen to merge themselves in a higher truth that comprehends them both. In any ordinary discussion the process may be seen at work. If X asserts 'The use of force is always wrong', and Y replies 'The use of force is not always wrong', after discussion they may agree on some such formula as this: 'The use of force in the interests of self-aggrandisement is wrong, but the use of force in the maintenance of public order is right.' The argument has moved from thesis to antithesis, and from antithesis to synthesis. Hegel maintained that the world process is similarly dialectical in character, and develops by the continuous unification of opposites, the various succeeding and constantly repeating stages corresponding to thesis, antithesis, synthesis.

Marx applied this 'dialectic' idea to the course of social history. The first stage was primitive Communism—the producer of goods owned the means of production and himself reaped the entire fruits of his labour (Thesis). This happy state of affairs was negated by historical society—the means of production were owned by one class (capitalists), and the actual work was done by another class (the proletariate), who reaped only a small fraction of the fruits of their toil, the bulk going to the masters to whom they sold their labour (Antithesis). The good feature of this stage was the great advance in scientific technique. The tragic feature was the bitter class antagonism resulting from the wealth and luxury of the capitalists (who were bent on retaining their privileges), and the squalid poverty and misery of the proletariate (who were chafing to escape from their bondage). Hence, so he argued, the inevitable third stage (Synthesis), when a classless society would emerge, and the Communism of the first stage would be combined with the scientific technique of the second, and when the producers as a community would own all the means of production and use them co-operatively.

The movement from stage one to stage two was slow and gradual, evolutionary, but the movement from stage two to stage three will be swift and sharp. Thus, according to Marx, there is a dialectical movement in history whose inevitable issue is the establishment of a Communistic Society.

Marx is on firm historical ground only on what he says about the second stage—otherwise his dialectic is simply the artificial application of a philosophical idea to the course of history. There is no historical evidence that primitive society was communistic, so that what he says about the first stage is based on doubtful conjecture. And what about the third stage? Will there ever be a classless society where all will share and share alike? Would such an arrangement be just? Are not the able and the industrious entitled to greater rewards than the incompetent and the lazy? Is it true that nothing worth mentioning was produced in the second stage but skill in the technique of production? Is the

so-called 'class culture' produced during the second stage a mere 'bourgeois' thing which is to perish with the bourgeoisie? Is man's sole concern the production of the means of livelihood? If men live and labour simply for the means of subsistence, will they find life worth living? Are manual workers the only people who really work? Most serious of all, is it not a criminal thing to foster amongst manual workers bitter antagonism to the rest of society, and to claim that they should rule the roost and dragoon the rest of society into submission to their will? Is it true that social justice can be achieved only by the bloodshed of fratricidal strife? Is contempt for members of another class any less wicked than contempt for people of another nation? Should brute-force methods ever be resorted to until every possibility in the way of moral suasion has been tried in vain? There are many features of this scheme which the Christian can only uncompromisingly condemn.

According to Marx, the cardinal and decisive factor in history is the economic factor, and all men's ideas about law, politics, religion and ethics have been moulded by it. Such a view is clearly materialistic. But historical materialism must be distinguished from philosophical and psychological materialism. According to philosophical materialism, matter and motion are the only realities—and with that view Marx doubtless agreed. According to psychological materialism, mind is an epiphenomenon, an accidental concomitant of matter, and here again Marx doubtless agreed. His own materialistic theory, however, was something quite different. Marx found the source and spring of all men's ideas in the economic factor, by which he meant not the technique of production but the relations of production. The relations of production can be described as feudal, bourgeois, or communist. In feudal society, the serf worked so many days for his lord, and the rest of his time for himself. In bourgeois society, capitalists and investors own all the means of production, while the actual work is done by the proletariate, who simply sell their labour to their capitalist masters. In communistic society, the workers collectively own all the means of production and thus reap the

entire fruits of their labour. Marx held that all the so-called higher life of man is simply a projection from his economic life; in other words, all his political, religious and ethical ideals are simply shadows cast by economic circumstance. Such, then, is the foundation stone of Communism—the principle of material causality. This, of course, is frankly atheistic. Yet this atheism is nevertheless in a state of unstable equilibrium, for it is associated with ideas that are inconsistent with it. The Communist believes that the actions and reactions of history will eventually issue in a society where all will have a fair deal and from which all social cruelty and injustice will have disappeared. This transformation is regarded as inevitable. 'The wheel of history,' we are told, 'moves slowly on to the ultimate, inevitable, irrepressible goal of Communism.' Such we are assured is the rational plan of the universe. So apparently there is some other factor at work besides the economic, a superhuman, or, at any rate, a non-human factor. The Communist puts his trust in what he calls 'the process of history', and assumes that man is in the grip of forces which are inexorably raising Society to higher and higher levels in the direction of an ideal goal. He thus believes that there is some power at work other than man and greater than man; a power which man can oppose or to which he can render willing service; a power which, in spite of the opposition of men, must eventually triumph, because it is the reality of the world. As Bertrand Russell has pointed out, Marx, in spite of his atheism, retained a cosmic optimism which only theism can justify. Or as Niebuhr says: 'Since Marxism is a secularized religion, the divine activity takes the form of a logic of history.'[1] Thus atheistic Communism is not without its 'faith'. Though it denies God, its confidence in that superhuman power which it calls 'the process of history' is greater far than some Christians' confidence in God. In so far as the Marxian dialectic presupposes the existence of some Power in the world which makes an ideal society sooner or later inevitable, it has undermined the very atheism which it

[1] *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics*, pp. 28 f.

so confidently affirms, for it thereby proclaims its faith in a Factor other and greater than man to which all men must eventually bow. At this point the 'supernatural' or at least the 'superhuman', which the Communist scorns and seeks entirely to exclude from all human calculation, finds its way back even into the temple of Communistic humanism.

The Communist idea that Christianity is a reactionary force, that makes the poor submissive and keeps them in subjection to their capitalist masters, is a palpable absurdity. Yet it is on this string that Communists constantly harp. Marx dismissed religion as the opium of the people. Lenin says in his book on Religion: 'The roots of modern religion are deeply embedded in the social oppression of the working classes, and in their apparently complete helplessness before the blind forces of capitalism. . . . All contemporary religions and churches, all and every kind of religious organization, Marxism has always viewed as organs of bourgeois reaction serving as a defence of exploitation and the doping of the working classes.' Similarly Mr. Laski declared that religion has all too often been regarded as a necessary restraint upon the multitude, 'as one of the most vital means by which the poor could be held in subjection.'[1] He even had the temerity to assert that 'in reading the New Testament, it is hard to discover in the central figure of its narrative any deep concern with a workaday world,'[2] though he contradicts himself later on by speaking of Jesus as 'one figure, however mighty, in the long record of Hebrew prophets who, like Amos or Hosea or the Second Isaiah, are seeking to make their creed a means of obtaining social justice for the humble man.'[3] He then tries to put the blame on St. Paul, for he says that Christianity has exercised little influence on social life, 'because, as it was shaped by Paul and his successors, it emphasized this life only as the vestibule to eternity, and put the chief importance of its dreams on the next world rather than on this.' It is true, no doubt, that Paul eagerly anticipated full salvation in the Hereafter, but the fact remains that if

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 142. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 27. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 146.

his ethical and social teaching for life in this world were realized, the state of affairs here on earth would far transcend the fairest of the Communist's dreams of an earthly paradise. Once more, Mr. Laski says: 'As Rousseau clearly saw, Christianity was able to build up men vowed to the service of God: its weakness was its inability to make men citizens.' But again, it is the constant emphasis of the New Testament that there is no such thing as the service of God which does not involve the loving, sacrificial service of man. The function of Christianity, therefore, from the Communist point of view, is simply to comfort the poor, and to keep them submissive, in their hard lot by promising them ample compensation in the world to come, 'pie in the sky', as the saying goes.

Now there is no smoke without fire, and there have been, and possibly to some extent still are, perversions of Christianity which give some ground for the Communist attitude. Even Wilberforce, the champion of the slaves, reminded the poor that their lowlier path had been allotted to them by the hand of God, and that all human distinctions would soon be done away when rich and poor alike were admitted to the possession of their heavenly inheritance. And, alas! when Shaftesbury sought to mitigate industrial ills, he found his most malignant opponent in John Bright. In many a parson- and squire-ridden village in Victorian times, the children of the poor were taught that it was their business to do their duty in that state of life to which it should please God to call them. There are probably few of us who have not at one time complacently sung: 'The rich man in his castle, the poor man at his gate, God made them, high or lowly, and ordered their estate.' Further, there have been preachers who have struck chiefly the 'wooing note', and who seem to have regarded it as their duty to present Christianity just as comfort, rather than as challenge. They have stressed what one might call the providential aspects of religion, telling their people what God would do for them, without summoning them to do the will of God. It is a great mistake to suppose that the chief

function of religion is comfort. The symbol of the Christian faith is the Cross, and the bearing of a cross is a condition of Christian discipleship. Our Lord's constant appeal is for devotion to the will of God. He never promises that if we do the will of God we shall bask in perpetual sunshine and find life's weather set fair. On the contrary, He declares that whether we build our lives on the rock of obedience or the sands of disobedience, there will be times when the rain descends and the floods come and the winds blow. And how can anybody who has ever caught a glimpse of Calvary, a very terrible affair, declare that the rôle of religion is to dole out illusory comfort? As a matter of fact there are very few people who think of religion as just comfort, or who imagine that the function of Christianity is to keep them quiet, patient and submissive, while their capitalist masters exploit them to their hearts' content. However firm their faith in a future life, Christian people are usually perfectly clear as to the part which true religion plays in life here and now. They think of God, as Christ taught them to think, as One Who calls them to a high and heroic obedience to Himself, and gives them grace to obey. The 'transcendent constraint' element—not 'comfort'—is usually the vital nerve of their religious life. The 'dope' theory is simply childish—ridiculous in the light of the part which religion plays in the rank and file of Christian people, and positively grotesque in view of the lives of such people as St. Francis, John Howard, William Carey, Elizabeth Fry, William Wilberforce, the Earl of Shaftesbury, Florence Nightingale, Thomas Barnardo, and Abraham Lincoln—for their religion was no 'opiate' but a dynamic, a force making for human uplift and the regeneration of the world.

Perverse as is the Communist attitude to religion, Communist treatment of ethics is, if anything, worse. The high sense of moral obligation, of an imperious 'ought', of a transcendent constraint, is dismissed outright as sheer illusion. All our ideas of right and wrong, good and bad, are declared to be disguised expressions of individual and social preference. All moral judgments are declared

to be nothing more than the expression of the feelings of approval or disapproval entertained by social groups and motivated by what are considered to be the political and economic interests of these groups. Moral ideals are simply the dreams of the oppressed, determined by their economic misery, or they are the slogans by which they seek to justify their struggle for better conditions. 'Liberty' is the watchword of the bourgeois class, and means nothing more than economic freedom, that is, freedom to go on exploiting the proletariate. In all these appeals to what are commonly regarded as high ideals or moral principles, men are simply seeking selfish material objectives. So-called 'ideals' are not 'values' and have no validity, but are simply the means whereby the various classes pursue their common interests.

That we are all of us apt at times to regard what is in our own interest as right, and what is not in line with our interest as wrong, is, of course, only too true. Freud has taught us that we are prone to rationalize, to find good reasons for doing bad things. And many centuries before Freud, Jeremiah said essentially the same thing when he declared that the human heart was deceitful and desperately wicked. To assert that some of our ideas about right and wrong, good and bad, are perverse and false, because they are suggested by what we conceive to be our interests, is fair criticism. But to suggest that all our moral ideas and ideals are of this nature is a monstrous perversion of the truth. When, for example, we feel we ought to show compassion to the needy and the suffering, or to be merciful to a repentant delinquent, or to check vindictive feeling, or to stifle the first motions of sullen hatred or unbridled lust, or to honour our word, or to spurn vanity and self display, or to be ready to forgive, how can we possibly be said to be seeking our selfish political and economic interests? The very suggestion that we are doing so is madness. The 'transcendent constraint' is a fact that cannot thus be spirited away.

Since Christian morality is thus scrapped, and along with it the Natural Law theory that there is an objective moral order capable

of being known by reason, what is the Communist criterion of right and wrong? It is simply this: all acts that are in the interests of the proletariate and that contribute to the success of the Communist revolution are right, and all acts which hinder or retard the movement towards the establishment of a Communistic society are wrong. This is just a new form of the old Jesuitry that the end justifies the means. It implies that Communists will stop at nothing to achieve their ends. The monstrous crimes that have stained European annals during the past few years—such things as the horrors of the Nazi concentration camps and the deliberate murder by horrible methods of hundreds of thousands of Jews without respect for grey hairs and without compassion for the cries of little children—are a nauseating tale, but perhaps the greatest crime of this crime-ridden century was Stalin's treatment of the Russian peasants who resisted his agrarian policy. 'Hell broke loose in seventy thousand Russian villages—a population as large as all of Switzerland's or Denmark's was stripped clean of all their belongings, not alone their land and homes and cattle and tools, but often their last clothes and food and household utensils, and driven out of the villages. They were herded with bayonets at railway stations, packed indiscriminately into cattle cars and freight cars, and dumped weeks later in the lumber regions of the frozen North, the deserts of Central Asia, wherever labour was needed, there to live or die. . . . Tens of thousands died of exposure, starvation, and epidemic diseases whilst being transported, and nobody dared guess at the death rate in the wilderness where the liquidated population was dispersed. Locomotives dragged these loads of agony from every part of the nation under armed guard, and when the human débris had been emptied in forest or desert, jogged back for more.'[1] Thus human beings who do not toe the Communist line are regarded as mere human dust, mere refuse for the dunghill. It would doubtless make our flesh creep if we heard the full tale of the torture and

[1] Eugene Lyons, *Assignment in Utopia*. (Quoted by Ingli James, *Communism and Christian Faith*, p. 69.)

death inflicted on many a decent man who has committed no other crime than questioning the wisdom of his Communist masters. Well, indeed, might Trotsky say: 'As for us, we were never concerned with the Kantian priestly and vegetarian Quaker prattle about the "sacredness of human life".' If Communist leaders deal out such treatment to their fellow-countrymen, what human regard are they likely to have for people of alien nationality and race? When men abandon the love of God they apparently lose the sense of human value and of the sacredness of human life. To such an appalling pass does the repudiation of the 'transcendent constraint' bring men. The Communist system of morality stands self-condemned.

We come now to Communist Eschatology—the Material Paradise. If the Communist complains that the Christian thinks of salvation in purely moral and spiritual terms, the Christian can at least reply that the Communist's conception of salvation is far more gravely defective in that he thinks of salvation in purely economic terms, and fondly imagines that the sole evil in the world is poverty, and that if only economic justice were achieved everything would be lovely in the world's garden, for all men would then think only of the interests of their fellow-men. Said Mr. Laski: 'We must begin with the assumption that the sole method open to mankind by which he can improve his lot is an increasing mastery over nature'—a mastery to be gained by the application of scientific methods and resulting in material abundance. But man might be richly blessed with material super-abundance and even then not find life worth living. Yet, as Maritain has pointed out: 'In actuality it is industrial production that seems to Soviet Communism the most urgent value in civilization.' Or as Mr. Laski declared: 'In essence, the Russian idea is . . . that men are saved by the chance of that abundance which comes from their mastery over nature.' He holds, too, that when men have been saved from poverty they will—apparently quite automatically—begin to yearn for spiritual salvation, for 'internal fulfilment'. But the idea that moral

regeneration follows necessarily from economic salvation, emancipation from poverty, is simply fantastic. If it were true, the rich would invariably be the most virtuous people, and a rise in his wages would invariably make a man a better man.

Thus the Communist's goal is simply a material paradise where every one will have a decent home, sufficient food and clothing, adequate scientific knowledge, and ample leisure. That this material paradise is something highly desirable for every human being is an idea that the Christian can endorse. What the Christian denies is that such a paradise would meet all the needs of man.

For one thing, will this new paradise be sinless? Will this new Garden of Eden (conceived of as the climax and crown of history) be without its serpent? In this egalitarian society will men rule themselves by reason and uniformly show goodwill to one another? Will greed, vanity, ambition, envy, jealousy, selfishness, vice, rascality be dead and done with? Men readily listen to Utopias and are easily induced to believe that in some wonderful manner everybody will become everybody's friends, 'especially', as Aristotle says, 'when someone is heard denouncing the evils now existing, which are said to rise out of the possession of private property. These evils, however, arise from quite another source—the wickedness of human nature.' Or to quote Niebuhr again: 'The hope that the internal enemies will all be destroyed and that the new society will create only men who will be in perfect accord with the collective will of society, and will seek no personal advantage in the social process, is romantic in its interpretation of the possibilities of human nature and in its mystical glorification of the anticipated automatic mutuality in the Communist Society.'[1] The Communist has all too facile a faith in the perfectibility of human nature and fondly imagines that when material well-being has been generally achieved, all selfishness will vanish from the earth. He overlooks the demonic forces in human life, the tendency of the evil impulses in man to

[1] *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, p. 194.

reach diabolical proportions, and the dark and turgid passions which degrade the life of man. If the Communist's material paradise were realized on this earth to-morrow, before a year had elapsed it would be patent to everybody that man's deepest need was salvation from sin.

And death will be in this earthly paradise as well as sin. It has been suggested that the tragedy of death will vanish if and when the allotted span of human life has been doubled! But will it? And even in a material paradise, many presumably would die before reaching the allotted span. The thought of mortality has always been bitter, and if life in this material paradise proved to be the blissful thing the Communist supposes it will be, it would be so hard to leave such bliss behind that the thought of mortality would become bitterer than ever.

But what will life be like in this paradise? Its outstanding feature will be factories supplying abundant commodities of all sorts, secured by the application of scientific methods, and resulting in lavish supplies for all the physical needs of man. Men will work and sleep, and eat and drink, going through the same routine day by day, seasoning life's dull menu as best they can with condiments drawn from artificial excitements. They will live without the thrill or the throb of any high moral purpose, without any spiritual vision or sense of spiritual values, without any hope of an ampler life or a better world, until at last they drop into their graves like beasts that perish, leaving behind them hapless children who will go through the same fatuous and futile process. Is this, then, the goal of history? Is this the grand climax of all the strivings, aspirations, hopes, dreams, sufferings and endeavours of humanity? If so, then existence is not worth its price, and it were better far if the earth were as barren as the moon. The atheism of the Communist is, so to speak, the lightning flash that lays the life of man in ruin. It makes existence meaningless and futile, and the universe a soulless, purposeless, brute thing that ought to go its senseless way without producing a single sentient creature to be mocked by such a cosmic farce and

swindle. As Dostoevsky said: 'If men are deprived of the infinitely great, they will not go on living and will die of despair.' Eucken gave utterance to the same truth when he declared: 'Without religion, man's life threatens to dissolve and flutter away.' Man is no mere vulture flying through the universe, shrieking for something to eat. He cannot live by bread alone. Industrial plant collectively owned and industrial production collectively managed can doubtless rescue men from oppression and poverty and make life possible, but only God-given ethical and spiritual ideals and a God-appointed ethical and spiritual goal can make life worth-while. The earthly paradise would doubtless be amply supplied with material goods, but its happiness would not thereby be guaranteed, for the happiness of a community depends in the main on the personal relations of its members, and those relations never can be all that they should be unless men and women recognize their duty to God. It is eternally true that the first commandment is to love God and the second is to love one's neighbour as oneself. A spurious Christianity may have often stressed the first and neglected the second. Communism, by stressing the second and completely ignoring the first is confronted by the dilemma that when its purely secular paradise has been achieved and livelihood is secure, life itself will appear a doubtful boon—except, perhaps, for cattle. The idea that material abundance alone will suffice to meet all the needs and solve all the problems of human life can be described only as Carlyle described Hedonism—it is a 'pig-philosophy'.

VI

THE CHRISTIAN ANSWER

We continually go astray if we have not Christ and His faith to guide us. . . . Repudiate Christ, and the human mind can arrive at the most astounding conclusions.'—DOSTOEVSKY, quoted by Henri de Lubac: *The Drama of Atheistic Humanism*, p. 184.

(*a*) GOD REGNANT

WE have seen that every man who really knows himself is conscious of a Moral Demand made upon him, and that this Moral Demand, rightly interpreted, is in reality what Dr. Baillie calls 'confrontation with God'. Thus God, as 'cosmic moral will' or as 'an enduring Power, not ourselves, making for righteousness', reveals Himself to man. Even those who do not rise to the acknowledgment of God, are nevertheless aware of a Moral Demand. The Rationalist concedes that the truly reasonable man will recognize that he ought to be a good man. The Stoic, however defective his moral ideal, did insist that it was a man's duty to make virtue his supreme concern. The Scientific Humanist, though he dispenses with God altogether, nevertheless admits that it is essential to the well-being of society that men should acknowledge the intrinsic value of human beings, treat their fellow-creatures as brothers, and exercise themselves in kindness and unselfishness. The Communist, though he is aggressively atheistic and scornful of any and every conception of a Categorical Imperative, does at least call upon men to bow to 'the logic of history' and to live and labour not just for themselves but for the common good. Thus all who really think about man and the meaning and conduct of life, be they Christian or non-Christian or even anti-Christian, appear to be convinced that man is confronted with some sort of Moral Demand to which he should yield obedience.

Christianity, from its very beginning, has been intimately and intensely concerned with this Moral Demand on men. True, it is not merely a Moral Demand, or it would be no Gospel, no 'good news', but would simply drive men to despair. Yet it does bring men face to face with a Moral Demand. It reveals the high possibilities of human nature—and that in itself is 'good news'. Further, it shows how those high possibilities can be increasingly realized—and that again is 'good news'. The Rationalist associates the Moral Demand with human reason, the Stoic with the 'nature' of the world, the Scientific Humanist with the requirements of the evolutionary process, the Communist with the 'dialectic' of social history. Christianity associates the Moral Demand with the Person of Jesus Christ. As has been truly said, Christian belief springs from the conviction 'that once upon a time the very Light of the World became manifest in the thick of our strange history . . . that in Christ God finally communicated His will to men and brought man's end fully into the light.'[1] The appeal of Jesus 'is an appeal which brings men face to face with a decision which they must make.'[2]

Mere abstract ideas, however true and excellent in themselves, are cold as moonlight, and have no quickening power. They cannot *move* men and *save* men. It is for that reason that Aristotelian and Stoic ethics have exercised so little influence upon the mass of mankind. Nor can one make men humane in their dealings with one another by the mere declaration that the evolutionary process or the dialectic of history requires of them that they be humane. As Dr. Wheeler Robinson affirmed: 'Truth must always be made incarnate to become *power* as well as truth.'[3] The stupendous strength of the moral appeal of Christianity is due to the fact that it comes to us in and through a Person, and that the appeal that reaches us through this Person is so comprehensive, so searching, so far-going that in comparison all other

[1] Alec Vidler, *Christian Belief*, pp. 12 and 89.
[2] Goguel, *The Life of Jesus*, p. 570.
[3] *The Christian Experience of the Holy Spirit*, p. 154.

moral appeals fade away into insignificance, just as the stars are extinguished for us when the sun rises. Jesus Christ is goodness incarnate; in Him the highest moral law becomes articulate; in Him we touch the supreme moral reality of the universe; He is the last and highest fact of which moral reason takes cognisance. Stoic teachers, notably Seneca and Epictetus, urged their disciples to conjure up before their minds the figure of a Good Man and to live their lives as if in his presence and to do everything they did as if he saw. They thus revealed that they felt the need of an incarnation of the moral ideal which they held up before men. That need is met for the Christian, not in any fictitious figure produced by the exercise of the imagination, but in the Historical Person of Jesus Christ. As Matthew Arnold said: 'That there *is* an enduring Power, not ourselves, making for righteousness, is verifiable, as we have seen, by experience; and that Jesus *is* the offspring of this Power is verifiable from experience also. For God is the author of righteousness; now Jesus is the Son of God because He gives the method and secret by which alone is righteousness possible. And that He *does* give this, we can verify, again, from experience. It *is* so! try, and you will find it to be so! Try all the ways of righteousness you can think of, and you will find that no way brings you to it except the way of Jesus, but that this way does bring you to it.'[1] It is just plain fact that the moral ideas and ideals advanced by Greek Rationalism and Stoicism and Scientific Humanism are not comparable to those incarnate in Jesus Christ.

Dr. E. S. Waterhouse justly complains that modern books on Ethics usually ignore Christianity altogether. As he points out, Mackenzie merely makes one reference to Jesus, remarking that he was neither recluse nor ascetic, and quotes St. Paul twice. Muirhead has three incidental references to Jesus and none to St. Paul. But J. S. Mill is referred to eighteen times and Kant nineteen times, often at length. Yet, as Dr. Waterhouse says, if we ask ourselves which has had the greater influence upon both

[1] *Literature and Dogma*, p. 313.

the theory and practice of morals, the Sermon on the Mount or Hedonism, the Epistles of St. Paul or the Critique of Pure Reason, the absurdity of such disproportion leaps to the eyes.[1]

As a historian has said: 'It was reserved for Christianity to present to the world an ideal character, which through all the changes of eighteen centuries has inspired the hearts of men with an impassioned love; has shown itself capable of acting on all ages, nations, temperaments and conditions; has been not only the highest pattern of virtue but the strongest incentive to its practice; and has exercised so deep an influence that it may be truly said that the simple record of three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers and all the exhortations of moralists. This has indeed been the well-spring of whatever is best and purest in the Christian life. Amid all the sins and failings, amid all the priestcraft and persecution and fanaticism that have defaced the Church, it has preserved in the character and example of its Founder, an enduring principle of regeneration.'[2] True as it is that Aristotle makes many wise and acute remarks in his analysis of what the good man is, yet the part which his teaching has played during the last two thousand years in the actual creation of good men is completely negligible, while the goodness inspired by the love of Christ is an amazing story too voluminous to be told. True, again, the Stoic called on men to make the pursuit of virtue the supreme concern of their lives, but it is an incontrovertible historical fact that the love of Christ has proved infinitely more effective in that regard. And is any consideration of the past course of evolution or the desirable course of future evolution ever likely to be in the slightest degree as effective as the love of Christ in making men humane, kind and unselfish in their dealings with one another? Belief in the dialectic of social history and

[1] *Ethics and Christian Ethics, Philosophy*, quoted by S. Cave, *The Christian Way*, April 1943.

[2] Lecky, *History of European Morals*, ii. pp. 8 f.

the hope of a material paradise will not, in the long run, suffice to move men to live not just for themselves but for the well-being of the community (however effective they may seem to be while there is wealth still to be plundered and redistributed), for only the love of Christ is likely to do that.

The history of Christian conversion testifies to the immense influence of the Moral Demand inherent in the appeal of Christ. Starbuck has made it clear that in the vast majority of cases the desire, of one kind or another, for a better life has been the prime motive in Christian conversion. People have turned to Christ because they thought that He would enable them better to serve mankind, or because they were attracted by the high moral ideal incarnate in Him, or because they were disgusted with themselves, or because they had been confronted with the fact of Christ by some teacher, or because they were attracted by the example of the Christ-life which they had seen in others.[1] So, apparently, it has always been. Dr. A. C. Underwood rightly referred to the conversion of St. Paul as a conspicuous example of the intellectual type of conversion, because it turned on the acceptance of the proposition that the crucified Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah.[2] But even St. Paul's conversion was not exclusively intellectual, for he was aware also of a deep moral and spiritual need which Christ alone could satisfy. He was painfully conscious in his pre-Christian days that no mere code, though it were the Torah itself, could ever make him a good man. 'I do not understand what I am doing,' he cries, 'for I do not do what I want to do; I do things that I hate. . . . I do not do the good things that I want to do; I do the wrong things that I do not want to do. . . . I who want to do right am dogged by what is wrong. . . . What a wretched man I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?' He had vainly sought peace with God by obedience to an external law, and, as he was powerless fully to obey that law, he felt estranged from God. It was his conviction as a Jew that only as

[1] *The Psychology of Religion*, p. 52.
[2] *Conversion: Christian and Non-Christian*, p. 145.

he was a good man could he enter into fellowship with God. Then at his conversion he came to see that only as he entered into fellowship with God in Christ could he ever become a good man. He found the gospel of Christ a divine force leading to salvation for everybody who committed himself to it, and by salvation he meant complete emancipation from all evil and complete self-dedication to all that was godlike and good, a state of mind and heart to be brought about by union with God in Christ. Hence his triumphant declaration: 'But now at last, apart from any code, a righteousness of God has been disclosed . . . a righteousness of God through self-committal to Jesus Christ.' He found in Christ the way to harmonious relations with God and to the good life, so that the Moral Demand of which he was aware could be met. Similarly it was pre-eminently the moral appeal of Christ that led to the conversion of Augustine. He had been the slave of sensuality, held fast by his iniquities, though, as he admits, at times he longed to make an end of all his vileness. Then he says 'Lo, I heard a voice from the neighbouring house. It seemed as if some boy or girl, I knew not which, was repeating in a kind of chant the words "Take and read, take and read".' He took up the volume of the Apostle and read: 'Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ as a garment and make not provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof.' In that instant he became a changed man. He was enabled in Christ to meet the Moral Demand from which he could not escape. So also, in modern times, the annals of the Salvation Army make it abundantly clear that a suddenly awakened desire for a good life instead of a bad one is usually the prime factor in conversion. The point is well brought out in Masefield's story of the conversion of Saul Kane.[1] The wickedness of his drunkenness and lechery and ribaldry was brought home to him, and he was confronted with the Moral Demand and saving power of Christ in the words addressed to him by the Quakeress:

[1] *The Everlasting Mercy.*

'Saul Kane,' she said, 'when next you drink,
Do me the gentleness to think
That every drop of drink accursed
Makes Christ within you die of thirst,
That every dirty word you say
Is one more flint upon His way,
Another thorn about His head,
Another mock by where He tread,
Another nail, another cross.
All that you are is that Christ's loss.

. . . . . .

And 'Tick. Slow. Tick. Slow' went the clock;
She said, 'He waits until you knock!'

Saul Kane faced that Moral Demand and looked to Christ for power to meet it. He was soon a changed man—

'And in my heart the drink unpriced,
The burning cataracts of Christ.
I did not think. I did not strive.
The deep peace burnt my me alive.
The bolted door had broken in,
I knew that I had done with sin.
I knew that Christ had given me birth
To brother all the souls on earth,
And every bird and every beast
Should share the crumbs broke at the feast.'

No man can be fairly and squarely confronted with the Moral Demand of Christ without realizing that he is brought face to face with a decision that he must make. In Christ he sees the kind of man he ought to be, and to surrender to Christ is to gain the power to grow towards it.

But Jesus does not use the term 'Moral Demand'. He states the case in other terms. He calls on men to repent (that is, to change their minds) and enter the Kingdom of God. It cannot be too strongly insisted that the term 'Kingdom' does not mean 'realm'

but 'rule', so that the Kingdom of God is the rule of God, and to enter the Kingdom is to come under the rule of God. As Dr. Cave says, the Kingdom is 'God regnant and redemptive',[1] and he justly adds: 'Since the Kingdom of God denotes God regnant, we never find in the Gospels the common phrases of modern Christian piety about "building" or "extending" the Kingdom. The words the Gospels use are "entering" or "going in". Men are invited to enter the Kingdom as into something already existing.' Thus to be 'converted' is to enter the Kingdom, that is, to come under the rule of God. The Kingdom of God is 'the control of life by righteous love or loving righteousness'.[2] In this conception of the Rule of God in the heart, religion and ethics meet. God takes the initiative and comes to the soul of man with a transcendent moral claim. When a man recognizes that claim and voluntarily surrenders himself to it, he has come under the Rule of God. It is in this way that the living God enters into the living experience of man, for man thus comes to know God as the light of his mind, and finds in obedient fellowship with God the strength and inspiration of life. We thus gain high ethical ideals and establish contact with a Power that enables us progressively to realize them. So long as we regard our ideals as our own, in all our ethical endeavours we are simply trying to raise ourselves by tugging at our own boot-straps. But the initiative in the re-making of personality cannot come from within the personality that is to be re-made. When, however, we recognize and surrender ourselves to God's transcendent claim upon us, our ideals are no longer our own, but His ideals for us, and we become conscious of His power working within us.

As Wellhausen said: 'The recognition and fulfilment of moral claims is the result of the activity of God, a religious transaction.'[3] The real secret of the Kingdom is, therefore, very simple. That is why Jesus says that a man can enter it only as he has a childlike

[1] *The Christian Way*, p. 39.
[2] L. Hodgson, *Christian Faith and Practice*, p. 52.
[3] *Israelitische und Judische Geschichte*, p. 385.

heart, that is, only as he is receptive. In spite of its simplicity, however, it is the most precious thing in life, for when a man is under the rule of God, he has an inward Monitor and Guide to direct his steps aright. On all the central issues of life, he takes his moral cue from God. In the Kingdom of God within him, he has the compass and chart by which he can steer his course across life's sea. That is why the Kingdom of God is so unspeakably precious, the most valuable thing that any man can possess. 'The Kingdom of God is like a man who is a merchant seeking beautiful pearls; and when he had found a very costly pearl, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.' All the ethical teaching of Jesus is simply an exposition of the ethics of the Kingdom of God, of the way in which men inevitably behave when they actually come under the rule of God. 'The kingdom of God is within you, and whoever knows himself will find it.' And who that knows his own heart can fail—in his better moments, at least—to be aware of a transcendent moral claim made upon him? And who that faces honestly and without prejudice the ultimate implications of that claim can fail to realize that he is in touch with a Power, not himself, making for righteousness? Jesus thus brings religion and ethics down from the clouds of speculation and theory and bases them on the rock foundation of the innermost experience of man at his best. Here, too, we see—in part—the significance of the Incarnation. As Reinhold Niebuhr says: 'A general revelation can point only to the reality of God, but not to His particular attributes.'[1] Thus the sense of 'transcendent constraint' is a sort of general revelation pointing to the reality of God, but in God's special revelation of His mind and will in the Person of Jesus Christ, the attributes of God and the full content and implications of that transcendent constraint are made manifest, for in Christ we realize what life under the rule of God is like. 'It is in Him that we see what man is capable of being.'[2]

[1] *Beyond Tragedy*, p. 15. [2] L. Hodgson, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

(*b*) God Redemptive

Reference was made above to the fact that the Kingdom of God means 'God regnant and redemptive.' Man being what he is, God could not be 'regnant' unless He were also 'redemptive', for as a matter of fact man does not meet, and is apparently incapable of meeting, the high moral claims which God makes upon him. Thus, 'when a man is exposed to the encounter of God in Christ, he finds himself in the first place convicted of sin.'[1] At that idea the modern man is apt to jib. Yet, after all, most people readily enough admit that they have their faults, that they often do what is wrong, and that to err is human. These faults and wrong-doings and this proneness to err are often slurred over as things natural, matter-of-course, and inevitable. But when we encounter God in Christ, we can no longer regard them as trivial things or harmless eccentricities, but realize that they are offences against God, and are constrained to cry: 'God be merciful to me, sinner that I am.' We are aware not only of 'sins' but of 'sin', that is, not only of sinful acts but of a sinful state from which those sinful acts spring. There is much unreal talk about 'sin', but the plain fact is that egotism, ego-centricity, is somehow ingrained in our nature, and it is from *that* that all sins arise. Perhaps the best definition of 'sin' ever given was that of T. H. Huxley (though he makes no reference to the word 'sin'): 'Men agree in one thing . . . to do nothing but that which it pleases them to do.'[2] 'Sin' is precisely that—self-will that rejects, or at least resists, the rule of God, egotism rampant, saying 'No' to God.

Aristotle had no sense of 'sin' because for him the Moral Law was not a Divine Imperative but consisted of rules laid down by Reason, so that what he regarded as wrong-doing was merely an error of judgment. The Stoic, again, had no sense of sin. He regarded the virtuous life, as he conceived it, as life in harmony with the Nature of things, so that all other behaviour was merely

[1] A. Vidler, *op. cit.*, p. 92. [2] *Evolution and Ethics*, p. 17.

unnatural. The Scientific Humanist has no sense of sin. Those who act rightly from his point of view are co-operating with the evolutionary process, while those who do not are behaving in a manner unfortunate both for themselves and for society—a matter of regret, no doubt, but that is all. The Communist has no sense of sin, because he regards man's conduct as determined by economic circumstance. An Ebenezer Scrooge displays selfish, grasping greed simply because he is afraid of the poverty that would result should he lose his wealth. Those who resort to brutal violence are driven to such conduct by their impecuniosity. For the Communist, the *only* evil is poverty, and he fondly imagines that when poverty is no more, evil will vanish from both individual and social life—an idea so fantastically stupid that one cannot understand how any man in his right mind can possibly entertain it.

The superficiality and the unrealistic nature of these theories as to the cause of our human malaise is palpable. The root cause of that malaise is not that men are often guilty of errors of judgment or that they are unnatural or that they fail to co-operate with the evolutionary process or that they are poor, but it lies where Jesus found it: 'For from within, out of the heart of man, proceed evil machinations, sexual vice, stealing, murder, adultery, insatiableness, malice, deceit, shamelessness, jealousy, abusive speech, arrogance, utter moral perversity'—and, incidentally, all these evil things are the direct products of man's native egocentricity.

True, the evil in human nature has often been exaggerated. Theologians have spoken of unregenerate mankind as a *massa perditionis*, and have propounded the hopeless doctrine of the total depravity of man, declaring him to be a creature of such a nature that he is utterly incapable of anything good. But though they have propounded this doctrine, they have seldom, if ever, really believed it. Who, for instance, would affirm that little children are totally depraved? Even Calvin, who stated the doctrine in its gloomiest form, in his introductory remarks on the Decalogue,

declares that the Ten Commandments are 'in a manner written and stamped on every heart. For conscience, instead of allowing us to stifle our perceptions, and sleep on without interruption, acts as an inward witness and monitor, reminds us of what we owe to God, points out the distinction of good and evil, and thereby convicts us of departure from duty.'[1] If that is so, man cannot be *totally* depraved. It is only fair to the theological champions of total depravity to point out that others besides theologians have reached the same dismal conclusion about man. Machiavelli, for example, wrote: 'Men never behave well, unless they are obliged; whenever a choice is open to them and they are free to do as they like, everything is immediately filled with confusion and disorder. Men are more prone to evil than to good . . . and . . . follow the wickedness of their own hearts.'[2] There are psychoanalysts, too, who paint man jet-black. Freud, for example, is said to have 'discovered all the filth of which human nature is capable'.[3] The average man of the world also takes a low view of his kind, and is convinced that every man 'has his price', that the one motive behind all conduct is self-interest. He postpones the social millenium to the Greek Kalends, on the ground that it cannot be till there has been a change in human nature, and, in his opinion, human nature never changes but is doomed to the end of time to remain in the same incorrigibly selfish, egotistic state.

But the idea that there is *nothing* but evil in human nature is obviously false. It is as certain as the shining of the sun that man is capable of good as well as evil. As Plato suggests, man drives two steeds, and though one is black and fractious, the other is white and tractable. Every war reveals that man is by nature capable of things both sublime and horrible. There are miners whose normal manner of life leaves much to be desired, but who, when an explosion in the pit has put the lives of their comrades in dire peril, display a death-defying heroism and gallantry to

[1] *Institutes* II. viii. 1. [2] *Cambridge Modern History*, Vol. I. p. 203.
[3] C. G. Jung, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, p. 46.

which many respectable people probably never would and never could rise. Slum life is sordid enough but it is not without its splendour. Sir Frederick Treves[1] tells of a man in the East End of London, who went home one night the worse for drink, and picking up the paraffin lamp hurled it at his wife with fatal results. But when the poor woman lay dying in hospital and was visited by a magistrate, who wished to learn from her lips exactly and precisely what happened, in order to save her wretched husband from prison or the gallows, with her last breath she gasped: 'It was an accident.' She told a lie, but a superb lie—with her last words she sought to screen the man by whose hand she died. If that is a fair sample of human nature, man is not totally depraved. The soul of man is an arena where a contest is being fought out, a contest described by St. Paul as one between flesh and spirit, but the Apostle recognizes that man is not all flesh, there is spirit too, or there would be no conflict. There is a Dr. Jekyll in man as well as a Mr. Hyde, an Abel as well as a Cain, an Angel as well as a Devil. If man were totally depraved, all devil, the very grace of God itself could never save him. Beneath the ashes of collapsed human nature, there still lie the sparks of celestial fire. The divine image has faded but it is still there and can be renewed.

> Down in the human heart, crushed by the tempter,
> Feelings lie buried that grace can restore;
> Touched by a human hand, wakened by kindness,
> Chords that were broken will vibrate once more.

Nevertheless, the evil in man must not be under-rated. Sin is not to be dismissed, in Emerson's way, as the mere mumps and measles of the soul, or, in Nietzsche's way, as a priest's invention. The long sad story of man's inhumanity to man, the social evils that have made life bitter for millions through the ages, and the horrors of war make it impossible to dismiss with a wave of the hand the dark side of human nature. We have been frequently told in recent years that the term 'miserable sinners' is meaningless

[1] *The Elephant Man*, p. 121.

to the present generation, that the modern man does not worry about his sins, nor does he suppose that his peccadilloes are of any consequence to any God there may be. The tragic state of the world to-day seems rather to indicate that man has not been worrying enough about his sins, and has been treating the dark possibilities of human nature much too frivolously. Ages ago, Hesiod gave utterance to a truth which man neglects only at his peril: 'Vice is easy to acquire in abundance: the road thereto is smooth, and the thing sought is near; but between men and virtue the immortal gods ordained much sweat; the track is long and steep upwards, rough at the outset, though when a man has arrived at the summit, then it becomes easy.' As Dr. Bevan pertinently asks, how is it that, all the world over, following the good impulses is likened to going uphill, and following the evil impulses to going downhill?[1] The words of Ovid: *Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor*[2] awaken a responsive echo in the heart of every man who really knows himself. Hamlet was speaking for all of us when he said: 'I am myself indifferent honest; but yet I could accuse me of such things that it were better my mother had not borne me. I am very proud, revengeful, ambitious, with more offences at my beck than I have thoughts to put them in, imagination to give them shape, or time to act them in.'[3] We can all sometimes say with Wordsworth:

> But what afflicts my peace with keenest ruth,
> Is that I have my inner self abused;[4]

or cry with Tennyson:

> And ah! for a man to arise in me
> That the man I am may cease to be.[5]

How then is moral failure—in religious terminology 'sin'—to be accounted for? There are certain psychological and psycho-analytical theories (e.g., Behaviourism and Freudianism), which

[1] *Symbolisn and Belief*, p. 63. [2] *Metamorphoses*, 7, 20. [3] Act III. Scene i.
[4] *Guilt and Sorrow*, xlix. [5] *Queen Maud*, Part I. X. vi.

ultimately imply that we behave as we do because we must. That there are people who are in a pathological condition and are not responsible for their wrong conduct is true enough, but to assert that nobody ever did anything but what he was bound to do and could not help doing would make all censure superfluous. all punishment cruel, and all 'sin' a figment of the imagination. From the evolutionary point of view, 'sin' is often described as relapse into animalism. But as Dr. Baillie has said: 'There is no sin in the farm yard.' Nor are the instincts which we share with the animal creation 'sinful'—for there is no 'sin' in the mating instinct or the sex instinct or the acquisitive instinct or the combative instinct—as such. These instincts are often the occasion of sin, but they are not its cause. All the instincts are so much raw material which we make into virtues or vices, and they are as essential to our virtues as to our vices.

> The surest virtues thus from passions shoot,
> Wild nature's vigour working at the root.[1]

The real cause of sin is in the will—the wilful flouting of what we know to be the will of God in order to gratify our native egotism.

Now what is the spontaneous reaction of all seriously minded people to sin? They condemn not only the sin but also themselves as responsible for it. Even though others forgive them they cannot forgive themselves. They are conscious of a sort of pollution. The sense of guilt wrings the heart with poignant shame. It is not simply that they regret the disagreeable consequences of the act, they bemoan the act itself.

> O clear conscience, and upright!
> How doth a little failing wound thee sore.[2]

Such sensitiveness to wrong-doing is not morbid but natural and inevitable whenever the conscience is alert and alive. The more alert the conscience, the deeper the sense of shame when the

[1] Pope, *Essay on Man*, Ep. II. [2] Dante, *Purgatory*, Canto III.

witness of conscience has been violated. When conscience is dormant, the sense of shame does not arise. It is for that reason that the language of self-condemnation so often found in penitential psalms and the writings of the Saints seems to men of easy virtue to be grossly exaggerated. Such men never feel inclined to pray: 'Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.' Their inability to express themselves in this fashion is due, not to their 'healthy-mindedness' but to their lack of all moral and spiritual sensitivity, and to the fact that their ideals are pitched so low that they are easily satisfied with themselves. They have no understanding or experience of contrition. But contrition is one of the most significant features of ethical and religious experience. It is the best who usually feel the worst about themselves, because, in their case, conscience has become exacting where goodness is concerned, and unconsenting where evil is concerned. When we are contrite, we feel that we have sinned against ourselves as beings destined for obedient fellowship with God, that we have frustrated Another's purpose for us, and resisted a Will other and higher than our own. 'I have sinned *against heaven*' is the spontaneous cry of every contrite heart. It carries with it a sense of estrangement from God, a sense of guilt and an awareness of the need to be emancipated from the power and tyranny of sin.

To meet this deep need of the human heart, none of the rivals of Christianity that we have considered has anything to offer, but it is the fundamental affirmation of Christianity, confirmed again and again in Christian experience, that in Jesus Christ that need is met. Christianity's 'insistence that the first step in religion is for a man to recognize and acknowledge his sinfulness is not due to any morbid delight for muck-raking, but to the desire to set man free from the evil within him. . . . In Jesus Christ we see God in action rescuing the world from evil. . . . God has taken decisive action, has overcome the power of sin and offers to

us freedom from its chains.'[1] As St. Paul joyfully declares: 'There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. The spiritual principle of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the principle of sin and death. What the Law could not do in that it was weak through the resistance of the flesh, God accomplished by sending His Son in the guise of sinful flesh, for the purpose of dealing with sin . . . that the righteous requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us who walk not according to the flesh but according to the spirit.'[2] Christ came to deal with sin—the main problem of every man and of all the world. Christ came not only to reveal the *will* of God, to make clear what God requires of us, but also to reveal the *heart* of God, to make plain what God's attitude to us is, and what God can do for us. By His teaching and by His Cross and Passion He declares God to be a God of 'grace'.

Though all human analogies are imperfect, yet when we see 'grace' at work in human life, we gain a clearer understanding of what 'grace' means in the life of God. David's reaction when he learned that his rebellious son Absalom had been killed is a remarkable example of 'grace'. We are told that on hearing the news, he was much moved and went to his chamber weeping and crying aloud: 'O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son.' That cry reveals that in David's heart there was a love which his wayward, wanton, rebellious son did not in the least deserve, yet a love whose glowing fires Absalom's ingratitude had proved impotent to quench. There we have an adumbration of the central message of the Cross of Christ that the sin of man cannot destroy the love of God. Or take the case of Hosea. He had had the most painful experience that a man can know. Children had been born in his home who were not his own. Eventually his wife deserted him for her paramour. On being abandoned by her faithless lover, she sold herself into slavery to get her bread. Then Hosea did a sublime thing, he bought her out of slavery and took

[1] L. Hodgson, *op. cit.*, pp. 36, 11, 38. [2] Romans viii. 1–4.

her home to care for her. 'So I bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver, and an homer of barley and an half homer of barley.' He had suffered for her sin but still loved and forgave—that was 'grace'. Dr. Vidler tells a striking story of 'grace' at work in modern life.[1] A tradesman discovered that a trusted employee had been systematically stealing from his warehouse for years. He allowed the man to be arrested, sentenced and imprisoned. When the delinquent came out of gaol, his employer was there and greeted him with the words: 'Your place is open for you; come back; we will start afresh.' On reaching home, the man discovered that his wages had been paid in full to his wife all the time he had been in prison. There was no connivance at wrong doing. The seriousness of the man's offence had been brought home to him, but he was made to realize at the same time that his employer still cared for him and fully forgave him. There is nothing in human life nobler than 'grace', readiness to give men, once they realize and acknowledge their guilt, better than they deserve.

This 'grace' in human life is just a faint echo of the 'grace' of God. That God is 'gracious' is emphasized again and again in the Old Testament and above all in the teaching of Jesus. In the Sermon on the Mount we are called upon to be generous to those who have wronged us, that we may be the children of our Heavenly Father who makes His sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends His rain on the just and on the unjust. The same point is stressed in the Parable of the Labourers who all received the same wage whether they had worked twelve hours or only one. It has been rightly called the most evangelical of all the parables. God is not merely just, He is more than just, He is generous and gives men better than they deserve. Mere justice gives a man exactly what he deserves, no less and no more. In that way justice often crushes men and even damns them. Generosity, on the other hand, as a rule, quickens a man's higher and nobler powers, and so exercises a creative and redemptive

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 96.

force that mere justice does not possess, and, therefore, cannot exercise. General Booth used to say that the first step in the reclamation of a fallen man is to convince him that somebody cares whether he sinks or swims—and the creative factor in such a case is the man's realization that he is being treated better than he deserves. But nowhere in our Lord's teaching is this idea of 'grace' more brilliantly portrayed than in the Parable of the Prodigal Son. All that the son deserved was to have the door slammed in his face, but, instead of that, there was a kiss of welcome, a ring for his finger, shoes for his feet, and they killed the fatted calf and began to be merry. The wrong-doing was not lightly passed over. The father had suffered acutely as a result of the son's unfilial behaviour, and so he could rightly forgive. The son was repentant and so could rightly be forgiven—he was the object of 'grace', the recipient of undeserved favour.

But it was in His Cross and Passion that Jesus revealed supremely in His own Person the grace of God. The wickedest thing ever done by man was the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth. On Calvary we see the crucial encounter between Goodness and the Mystery of Iniquity which from time to time defies the Sovereignty of God. Yet, as Dr. Hodgson says: 'the more they made Him suffer, the more intensely He loved. . . . Once for all in the history of this world, He has won the right to forgive without any lowering of the standard of perfection.'[1] The Cross of Christ is at once the most frightful exposure of the sin of man and the supreme revelation of the love of God. 'God proves his own love for us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.' That is why the Cross of Christ brings the *assurance* of forgiveness to every contrite heart. The resultant sense of peace with God is called by St. Paul the 'Reconciliation', that is, the restoration of a fellowship that has been disturbed. (It is important to note that while the word 'atonement' has played such a conspicuous part in Christian thought, yet it is a word which the New Testament never uses. Its occurrence in the Authorized Version

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 43.

of Romans v. 11 is a mistranslation, corrected in the Revised Version to 'Reconciliation'.)

But it is not enough to be cleansed from the guilt of sin, and to have peace with God, we need also to be set free from sin's power and dominion. This process is described in the New Testament as 'Redemption'. In order to understand the word, we have to note that it was taken from the institution of slavery. The manumission or 'redemption' of slaves was a daily occurrence in New Testament times. The ceremony was usually performed in some pagan temple—which a man entered as a slave, and from which he emerged a free man. Thus 'redemption' is 'emancipation'. Many of the early Christians were, or had been, slaves, so that the term 'redemption', so often an enigma to the modern man, was a profoundly meaningful term to them, and St. Paul uses it to describe one of the profoundest things in Christian experience, namely, emancipation from the power of sin. In his thinking on this question, he was simply following the teaching of his Master. 'The Son of Man is come not to be served but (as a slave) to serve, and to give his life as a ransom to set many (slaves) free.'[1] 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, everybody who commits sin is a slave . . . if, therefore, the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.'[2] Man is all too often the abject slave of his lower nature, of raw instinct and passion, unable to do the good he wishes to do, seemingly helpless to resist the force of his natural impulses, just swept willy-nilly into sins which in his better moments he detests. When such a man is sick with sin and weary of his own impotence, what he yearns for is redemption, some power that will emancipate him from bondage to sin. As even Aristotle recognized, our nature is not in our power and those who are fortunate enough to have a good nature owe it to divine agencies.* It is the very essence of Christian experience that the man who commits himself to God in Christ gains a new power to deal with sin. Sin, progressively and more or less swiftly, loses its power over him, its fatal fascination, its charm, its attractive-

[1] St. Mark x. 45. [2] St. John viii. 34–36. * See p. 45 f., above.

ness for him. Ideally, the Christian is dead to sin, so that it has no more influence over him than the most attractive bait has over a dead fish. The proclivity to evil is superseded by a proclivity to good. The will to good is so reinforced that it is able to sweep obstacles aside as chaff is scattered by the wind. Instead of being bound under the iron law of nature, a slave to forces from whose blind necessity he cannot escape, and to passions which he cannot control, he is set free from this tyranny and led into that realm of freedom where he can realize his true destiny. As Hermann put it: 'The rule of God in us is our redemption'[1]—so we are back again at the idea that the Kingdom of God is God regnant and redemptive.

Thus we come to the Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit. However difficult it may be from the speculative side to understand the Trinity, when the matter is approached from the side of religious experience it is simple enough. We are sometimes told that we could understand the Trinity if we tried to look at it from God's point of view, but that is precisely something which we can never achieve. One thing at least is quite certain—by the 'Holy Spirit', the New Testament means God or Christ in action in the inner life of man. The natural impulses become the occasions of sin only when the spirit of man is cut off from the power of God. But when God enters into action in our hearts, we are in contact with a Power that enables us to control our lower impulses and re-direct them to high ends. The life of man is thus linked with the life of God—as it were, man's trolley-pole is put into touch with God's live wire. By the Spirit of God, the Christian man is transported into the moral sphere of God, and, in living communion with God, begins spontaneously and inevitably to eschew everything that is contrary to the Divine Nature. As we have seen, there are both higher and lower elements in human nature, but the higher are often hindered by the lower from finding expression. But the result of the action of the Spirit of God is the mobilization of these higher powers,

[1] *Dogmatik*, p. 75.

and what was previously impossible is rendered possible. The Spirit is thus the creative source and spring of constant and progressive moral and spiritual renewal. This gift of the Spirit has profound ethical results. It is significant that all the fruits of the Spirit, to which the Apostle refers, lie in the ethical realm—love, joy, peace, good temper, good feeling, goodwill, integrity, considerateness for others, self-control. Thus the secret of the good life lies in the mastery of the lower elements of our nature through the quickening of the higher elements by the Spirit of God, the Rule of God in the heart. That secret all the rivals of Christianity that we have considered completely miss, yet it is the only effective way to the 'good life' dreamed of by Aristotle, or to the 'pursuit of virtue' for which the Stoic stood, or to the 'desirable course of future evolution' or to the just and humane co-operative commonwealth which the Communist desires; and it is a secret that can and will become the treasured possession of any man who accepts what God offers by committing himself to Jesus Christ.

(*c*) The Consummation

And what about the future? According to Greek Rationalism, Roman Stoicism, Scientific Humanism, and Russian Communism, the future is very bleak. The Greek view of history was cyclic—there is to be merely eternal recurrence. Just as a tame squirrel in its wheel is in constant motion but gets nowhere, so history just revolves and revolves, while generation after generation of men are simply annihilated and become as though they had never been. The Stoic view was similar. Creation is to be followed by Conflagration, and Conflagration by Creation and so on *ad infinitum*, and once again successive generations of men vanish away by reabsorption in the Ethereal Fire—whatever that may be. The Scientific Humanist calls upon man to go on recognizing the intrinsic value of human beings and to exercise himself in kindliness and unselfishness until by some inexorable necessity

Nature has carried out her sentence of extinction on all things human, until man with all his hopes and aspirations and ideals has passed into the void whence he came, until the earth is as barren as the moon, and the universe, bereft of all life, rolls on its soulless, senseless, purposeless way without so much as any awareness anywhere even that it exists. The Communist finds the goal of history in a material paradise, but that will only last until it is suicidally destroyed by those 'poisons of degeneracy' which are 'endemic in all secularized Societies', and, in any case, all individuals, sooner or later, are snuffed out like candles, and suffer complete extinction. The Christian view is that 'the process of history has a purpose which will be and is being fulfilled. That purpose is the creation and gathering together of a community of persons who freely love God and rejoice eternally in His glory.'[1]

This Christian view is often dismissed as wishful thinking. But while the fact that we wish for it does not prove that it is true, the fact that we wish for it does not prove that it is false. Those who talk so glibly about 'wishful thinking' in this connection would do well to explain why man finds the thought of mortality so bitter. Even T. H. Huxley once declared that rather than suffer extinction he would prefer to go on living in the upper circles of hell, provided that the climate and the company were not too trying. But the real question at issue has little to do with the mere wishes of men—it is concerned rather with the reality of ethical and religious experience. As has been truly said: 'If all the worthiest achievements of human effort are inevitably destined ultimately to disappear utterly and to be as though they had never been, then . . . a very poignant question must inevitably be raised as to the rationality of the obligation to strive for the realization of such value, and one may question the very possibility of sustained moral effort by the man who honestly views the situation with open eyes.'[2] If the spirit of man is subject to

[1] A. Vidler, *op. cit.*, p. 108.
[2] *Hibbert Journal*, April 1935, p. 427 (Professor Corkey).

death, if all his moral and spiritual aspirations and endeavours are to end in nothingness, then the sense of moral obligation is an illusion, religion is an illusion, and life itself is senseless—'a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.' As Baron von Hügel insisted, it is not faith in a future life that is the basis of our beliefs in the reality and spiritual-ethical character of God, in a spiritual-ethical soul in man and in this soul's relation to that God: but, on the contrary, it is our beliefs in the reality of God and in a spiritual-ethical soul in man that support and postulate our faith in a future life.[1] We cannot doubt the reality of the transcendent constraint, for it is something from which there is no escape. Therefore we cannot doubt the reality of God. Further, we cannot suppose that the God who is the strength and inspiration of our life here will hereafter cast us off as rubbish to the void, and therefore we cannot doubt the life to come. In his Phaedo, Plato has recorded a discussion about the future life, in which Simmias affirmed that the best of human surmises about it was but a raft on which a man sailed not without risk, and that what he needed was some word of God to carry him more surely and more safely.[2] For the Christian, that word of God came in Jesus Christ, who presented Himself alive after His Passion by many positive proofs. *He* was not extinguished, and because He lives, we shall live also. 'This is Life Eternal, to know Thee the only true God and Him whom Thou didst send, Jesus Christ.'

[1] *Eternal Life*, p. 72. [2] Jowett, Vol. II. p. 229.

THE END

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