THE GREEKS AND THE GOSPEL

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W. T. Whitley Lectures for 1962

by

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was founded in 1949 for the purpose of encouraging Baptist scholarship, primarily (though not exclusively) in Great Britain. The lectures are so named in grateful appreciation of the outstanding services of the Rev. Dr William Thomas Whitley, M.A., F.R.HIST.S., to the cause of Christian learning and Baptist historical scholarship.

PREVIOUS PUBLICATIONS

1951 *The Unity of the Bible, by* H. H. Rowley.

1952 *Rivals of the Christian Faith*, by L. H. Marshall.

1954 *Puritanism and Richard Baxter*, by Hugh Martin, S.C.M.

1958 *The Baptist Union. A Short History*, by Ernest A. Payne.

1959 *Baptism in the New Testament*, by G. R. Beasley-Murray, Macmillan.

1960 *The Ark of God*, by Douglas Stewart.

1961 *The Restored Relationship*, by Arthur B. Crabtree.

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Contents

Preface

THE first four of the following lectures were delivered in 1962 at Spurgeon's College and at Bristol Baptist College in the spring and autumn respectively. I should like to express my gratitude to the principals, Dr G. R. Beasley-Murray and Dr L. G. Champion, for their kindness to me; I am also grateful to the staff members and to the students for receiving me so graciously. The fifth lecture, or epilogue, has been written since the other four and has not been delivered. Nevertheless, I have tried to maintain the lecturing style throughout; and though there are considerable amendments of the spoken versions of the earlier lectures, I have tried to keep everything within the proportions of a lecture given to divinity students and intended in the first place for them.

I have added such footnotes as seemed necessary, but I have not thought fit to make the references to scripture or to other authors which could reasonably be left to the reader to recognize for himself. One is necessarily 'debtor' to many in attempting a survey of a basic question of the kind which I have posed in these lectures. I am of the opinion that this question is one which needs urgently to be discussed today because of the return to a biblical theology and the active discussion of issues of Christian unity which may involve a reconsideration of the whole history of the Christian faith and its relation to human life and thought. Modern specialisms make it increasingly difficult for the classical scholar and the theologian to talk the same language and so to communicate with each other. The basic purpose of these lectures is to do what is in my power to keep these lines of communication open.

Among my Durham colleagues I am grateful to Professor C. K. Barrett, Professor Christopher Evans (now of London) and the Rev. C. E. B. Cranfield, for help and criticism; but I do

not wish them to be held responsible in any measure for the present form of the lectures. I am also grateful to Professor H. D. Westlake of Manchester and to Dr Champion for help with references. Mrs Hart, Secretary of the Classics Department of the University of Durham, has been a most helpful typist.

J. B. SKEMP

Durham
1963

Bibliographical Note

A FULL bibliography of the whole field to which some attention is paid in these lectures would take at least as much space as one of the lectures, and indeed might equal the whole book in length. Footnote references have been made to authorities specially consulted or specially relevant. A few books are noted below which in a sense cover the whole field of the contact of Christianity with the Greeks. Each of them (apart from those in Penguin editions) offers bibliography to serve those who wish to go further in the way the particular author has gone. These few works should be readily attainable by theological students and others interested in this field of enquiry who cannot easily read any language but English and whose means are limited.

It will perhaps be noted with surprise that only one work by T. R. Glover appears on this short list. This is not simply a concession to the fashionable tendency to belittle the work of men who belong to a half-century ago. The obvious work of Glover to be referred to would be *The Conflict of Religions in the Early Roman Empire* (London, Methuen, 1909, The Dale Lectures for 1907). But Glover's method there is to show a gradually increasing struggle with the existing orders of thought and government until the church could cry *Vicisti, Galilaee*. Without denying or forgetting Glover's famous words in *The Jesus of History* that the Christian 'out-lived, out-thought and out-died' the pagans, the facts remain dangerously two-edged on the plane of history in the early centuries: the truth lies midway between Glover's eager optimism and the pessimism of those who saw (and some who still see) church history as corruption by human wisdom of a pure and precious primitive faith. Moreover, a little more humility about Christians 'out-thinking' pagans would have been desirable. We now see how dangerous 'broad sweeps' can be, and (though

Glover's work is full of scholarly appreciations and insights) we are aware of the need of looking with a dull patience at details in the hope of reconstructing a more faithful picture. These lectures are based on the view that the church has never really faced the tension between the centrality of Calvary and Easter on the one hand and man's need to use his mind as well as his heart on the other. This issue is focused in Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 1. 22-24, and it is with these words in mind that all these lectures were written. I take the opportunity, however, of expressing personal regard for and indebtedness to T. R. Glover, whose lectures on the ancient world I found exciting and stimulating when I was a Cambridge undergraduate.

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CHAPTER I

The Greeks and the Gospel

TIMEO *Danaos et dona ferentes*—I fear the Greeks even when they are bringing gifts. This was the cautious reaction of the Trojan Laocoon to the introduction of the wooden horse into Troy, and it also indicates Virgil's understanding of the hesitations the Romans felt about their more brilliant and less stable Mediterranean neighbours.[1] Virgil's line still seems to fit the situation when one turns to consider the entry of the Greeks and of things Greek into the Christian church. After all, it will be said, the Trojan horse was not a gift—it contained the warriors who were to sack Troy. We may, of course, disclaim Laocoon's word *timeo*, and say that the true faith will boldly repel this insidious foe without any fear. So we say, but I wonder whether we are as bold as we think we are. Is there not in us something of the trembling of Eli, or of the fear of Uzzah for the safety of the ark of the Lord?[2] Suppose the Greeks *do* bring gifts after all, and that God has cleansed them so that they are neither common nor unclean? Are we not then found fighting against God if we reject them?

This whole question of the Greeks and the gospel is, of course, not a new one in the life and thought of the church. We can do no more now than seek to understand the form it takes in our own day. In particular, we have to consider it as it affects Anglo-American protestant theological thinking at a time when the aim of that thinking is above all to be 'biblical'. Yet we must remember also that the suspicion that whatever is Greek is a corruption of pure revealed biblical truth is a factor in protestant thought from

[1] Virgil, *Aeneid* ii. 49.

[2] 1 Samuel 4. 13; 2 Samuel 6. 6.

the Reformation onwards.[3] The rejection of scholasticism, that mediaeval marriage of Christian creed and Aristotelian reason, was bound to mean, for those who made the rejection, the repudiation of the Aristotelian in order to reassert the Christian. Modern distaste for metaphysical speculation renews the suspicions of the reformers. Insistence on activism and pragmatism is perhaps most triumphant in America; but the same anti-metaphysical bias was to be seen behind Adolf Harnack's conviction a century ago that the original pure gospel was corrupted by Greek influences by the end of the second century of the Christian era. In him, as in other Germans, the notion that activism alone is ethical and that all speculation is fatal to the growth of a sense of duty still further loads the case against the Greeks; for they are presumed to be incurably speculative but morally questionable. Revealed truth is said by such theologians to be concerned with will—the will of God and the will of man—and the Greeks are said to have no word for 'will', or to reduce willing to reasoning.[4] Finally, the renewed insistence on the importance of material

[3] The personal histories of Luther and Erasmus may have some relevance at this point: much would have been different had the Dutchman finally broken with Rome. The treatment of Wetstein by later 'Scholastic' protestantism did Holland no credit, however.

I am grateful to Professor C. K. Barrett for pointing out to me Calvin's comment on Titus 1. 12. Not only did the Reformer turn the hexameter of Epimenides there quoted into a Latin one of his own (*mendax, venter iners, semper mala bestia Cres est*), but he tells us (trans. W. Pringle, Calvin Society series) that 'from this passage we may infer that those persons are superstitious who do not venture to borrow anything from heathen authors.'

[4] Will, expressed in decision for which one was accountable, undoubtedly dominated the legal and social life of the Greek city-state: the elaborate testing before office and audit after it is evidence enough of this. The Socratic paradox 'no one errs willingly' was sidestepped by Plato himself in the *Laws* (see especially ix. 863. c 2 and E. B. England ad loc., also 864 a 1 sqq.) and challenged by Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, as it had already been by Phaedra in the *Hippolytus* of Euripides (lines 377–83). In Plato's final assessment of man's destiny it seems to be his *βούλησις*, his choice of good or evil, which determines his standing in the Universe. (*Laws* x. 904 b 9 sqq, d 5 sqq.) *βούλησις* clearly means 'will' in these Platonic passages. All Plato's myths of the soul's destiny include *moral* probation as a decisive factor.

factors in history, for which the Jew Karl Marx is so largely responsible, is commonly thought to lend support to Hebraic insistence on the body and to tell against a supposed Greek concentration on the soul. The Marxist conception of history as developing to a climax in the victory of the proletariat and the withering away of the state would be considered by many to be closer to the Bible view—even if it is the preaching of another gospel—than the Greek philosophical doctrines are, whether these Greek doctrines teach the eternity of the universe or its cyclical transformation which brings again and again the restitution of all things. The 'cyclic' view of history attributed to the Greeks is one of the chief targets of Biblical theologians.

The difficulty that any classical scholar finds in all this discussion is to recognize in the Greeks whom these theologians describe the flesh and blood inhabitants of the Greco-Roman world whom he has learnt to know in his classical studies. We have, of course, only limited evidence of the life these people lived, and all ancient historians bring their own framework of ideas to its reconstruction. So in turn do modern classical scholars. Even so, until the theologians' reconstruction of the ancient world of Greco-Roman times comes nearer to that made by professional 'secular' historians, it must itself stand under suspicion. It is much to be regretted that we do not know more from independent ancient sources about life in the eastern Mediterranean cities and regions in the first centuries of our own era; but there is a great deal that we *do* know which is relevant to our understanding of early church history; and it cannot be said that most theologians show any familiarity with it. Yet it ought to be an essential part of their introduction to their task.[5]

There is one particular vice in the theological picture (or rather, caricature) of the Greeks. They are always represented as philosophical thinkers—though by no means always as holding the

[5] Some works available in English for theological students are suggested in the bibliographical note before this chapter; but this note has limited scope, as is stated there and in the Preface. Some other works are referred to in footnotes.

same philosophical views. Yet in the main they are represented as philosophers committed to a cyclic view of the universe, to a strict division of soul and body (and usually as committed to a dualism which regards soul as good and body as evil) and to a doctrine of God which reduces him to the most abstract of all abstractions and drains him of the last vestiges of personality. Now this picture is a composite one representing what some Greeks undoubtedly did believe at some time—though none of them did in fact hold all these positions at the same time. Such a description of the Greeks ignores the fact that many other Greeks at all the relevant times thought differently, and that a multitude of them did not think in this systematic way at all. It is quite unhistorical to suppose that the earliest pure Greek converts to Christianity in Corinth and Salonica, Ephesus and Antioch held the cyclic view of history or thought their bodies to be the seat of evil or thought that God was the first unmoved mover. Even Dionysius the Areopagite, Damaris and the other members of the little church in Athens are not to be confused with the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers who challenged Paul in the market-place. In later centuries Greek philosophical doctrines were attributed to Dionysius, and on the strength of this these Neoplatonic doctrines achieved a kind of back-door admission into Christian circles; but the Dionysius we meet in the account in the Acts would be quite innocent of such doctrines.[6] If he really was a member of the Areopagus, he would be of some social standing and would have had experience of public life in Athens when she was virtually part of the Roman Empire though technically still a free state. We can no more assume that he would be a philosopher than we can assume that a city councillor in Oxford or in Cambridge is alive to the issues that the dons discuss, when they are discussing what they ought to be discussing.

Now the theologian might reply to all this criticism of his

[6] The doctrines go back to the sixth century, and Erigena translated them into Latin in the ninth. They combine Neoplatonism with a doctrine of church hierarchies.

historical unreliability that he is not concerned at all with reproducing a true picture of the Greeks of the earliest Christian centuries, but rather with expounding biblical doctrine; and he might claim that true biblical doctrine is most clearly defined by contrasting it with certain views held at certain times by certain Greek thinkers because these form its natural antithesis; and that therefore he is fully entitled to do as he does because he is an expositor of biblical truth. This seems to me a bad defence if put forward by theologians who insist on the importance and decisiveness of the historical element in Old and New Testament revelation. For in setting biblical truth in antithesis to a composite philosophical view labelled 'Greek' they are, whether they know it or not, putting 'biblical truth' forward essentially as a rival philosophy—a philosophy extracted from history, no doubt, but still a philosophy. Boman's[7] very influential and interesting study of the contrast of Hebrew and Greek language and ideas is expressly the setting up of one world-view in contrast with another. The Greek is interested in seeing, the Hebrew in hearing —and so on. Bultmann in his review of Boman's book[8] has no difficulty in showing how the antitheses in it are too sharp and how the Greeks did also think along the allegedly Hebrew lines and had expressions freely current for the concepts supposed to be foreign to them. One might perhaps add that purely 'Hebraic' teaching about 'seeing' God is prominent in the Old Testament: in Psalm 27, for instance, seeing and not hearing is the way of reassurance. But the basic question really is whether a man rightly hears the word of God if he seeks to build up out of it the kind of construction Boman has built.[9] Karl Barth would probably

[7] Thorlief Boman, *Das hebraische Denken in Vergleich mit dem griechischen*, Göttingen, 1952. English translation by J. Moreau, London, 1960. (Library of the History of Doctrine).

[8] *Gnomon*, vol. xxvii (1955), 551–8. This is a very full and important review: it is a pity that it has not been translated into English.

[9] Boman's treatment of time in Hebrew thought was already challenged by Bultmann in the *Gnomon* review. Though many scholars (notably Cullmann) have taken matters further still, they have rightly come under the lash of Professor

question whether *Religious Ideas of the Old Testament* is a good title for a theological book: there can be little doubt that he would reject out of hand *Philosophical Ideas of the Old Testament.* He would do so rightly as a hearer of the word.

It would be unfair, however, to say that all or even most biblical theologians have fallen into this snare: they tend only to be caught in it occasionally when finding themselves obliged to rebut something they label as 'Greek'. For the most part they seek to be interpreters of God's acts as revealed in scripture. The most important question therefore that a Christian who studies the Greco-Roman world can put to them is whether they do adequately what they profess to do as their main biblical task. I think that there is good reason to believe that they do not, and that their failure appears rather when they come to interpret God's acts in history as revealed in the New Testament. For they no longer seem to adhere to the principles they need for their interpreting of his acts in history as revealed in the Old Testament. I accept very gladly the basic postulate that Christianity is essentially a historical revelation, that it rests on what God has done, does and will do; that it entails the so-called 'scandal of particularity'—the fact that God acted here and not there (or not in the same sense there), now and not then (or not in the same sense then), and that under the old covenant he called one people among all the peoples of the earth. But I find this strict faithfulness to history observed only in the theologian's treatment of the Old Testament and of the life of ancient Israel. It is rare to find similar faithfulness to the truth revealed in the historical record of God's actual call of the Gentiles and in particular to his actual call of the Greeks. We shall, indeed, have to ask precisely what this means and who these 'Greeks' were. But Paul's declaration that 'there is no difference'

James Barr in *Biblical Words for Time* (Allenson, Naperville, Illinois, 1962). Professor Barr's previous onslaught in *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford, 1961) is directed at semantic constructions rather than philosophical ones like Boman's. Yet many of the semantic constructions are really philosophical ones in more fashionable sheep's clothing; and the *gravamen* of Barr's accusation is, after all, that it is the preconceived philosophy which spoils the lexicography.

(in spite of the fact that the Jew has much advantage every way) and his repeated insistence that there is neither Jew nor Greek in Christ is a revelation of a supreme act of God to which Acts provides the commentary. It is evidence of a Divine break-through to which Exodus points but which goes dramatically beyond Exodus; and no biblical theology is biblical which does not attempt to extract all the meaning of God's mighty acts. It might seem, on some interpretations of biblical theology, very heterodox on the part of the author of the fourth gospel to say that the law came by Moses but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. I do not doubt the Bible is a unity in the fundamental and important senses made clear by a very distinguished predecessor of mine as Whitley lecturer,[10] one to whose work and ministry we are all indebted; and I have no desire to achieve shock effects by quoting particular sayings out of context. But the testimony of the New Testament scripture is unanimous in this matter. At a time when the Old Testament and that alone was the Bible for Christians, Christian writers agreed to declare one thing, in writings which were only later canonized. Surely the canon of New Testament scripture was made no less under the Holy Spirit's guidance than the canon of the Old Testament scriptures. What then did these New Testament scriptures declare? They declared that the end of the ages had come; that God had spoken through his Son whom he had raised from the dead and that the promised new covenant was even more novel than the Jeremianic prophesy had led them to expect. There can be no detachment of one covenant from the other; but the Christian attitude to the relation between the covenants has been made explicit once for all by the author to the Hebrews (who was almost certainly a Jew writing to Jews) in the eighth chapter of that epistle. Here is a fixed standpoint from which all Christians, Jewish or Gentile, must from now on view the whole long story of God's faithful dealings with Israel. The writer to the Hebrews does in fact so view that history in the eleventh and twelfth chapters of this same epistle. His viewpoint is truly historical, even

[10] H. H. Rowley, *The Unity of the Bible*, London, 1953.

if he gives detailed attention to the more recent Maccabean saints though time fails him to tell of Gideon and of Barak. The danger of so many outlines of biblical theology offered to us today is that they suggest that Old and New Testaments may be used indifferently to illustrate one and the same level of God's dealing with man, and they assume that the language in which this dealing is expressed is essentially Hebrew even where it is accidentally Greek. These interpreters concede that it was not necessary for a Gentile convert to be circumcised, but they imply that he had to be Hebraized if he was to belong to the Christian church. It is high time that we were willing to look critically at this basic assumption in the light of the New Testament evidence. When the glorious vision on the way to Damascus halted Saul in his tracks, it was a Greek saying that reinforced the disclosure of the risen Christ. 'It is hard to kick against the goads' was something Greeks had long said to each other. Paul did not report this when explaining himself to rowdy Jews in the Hebrew tongue, but there is no reason to suppose that he (or Luke) invented it for his speech before Agrippa.[11]

It might, however, be well before proceeding further to consider how and why in all good faith biblical interpretation has tended to this unduly unified presentation, forgetting too much the reminders of Dr Rowley that recurring patterns and precise typology are not the basic clues, and that 'there cannot be the slightest suggestion that by the careful study of the Old Testament anyone could have written the New before its context of history took place.'[12] I think that this tendency to unbalance and this

[11] Acts 26. 14 (compare 9. 5, where the Laudianus (sixth cent.) and Latin manuscripts include the words, but against the consensus; and 22. 8). The saying *πρὸς κέντρα λακτίζειν* occurs as early as Pindar's second Pythian ode (at the end), and therefore before 470 B.C. With *κῶλον τείνειν* for *λακτίζειν* but in the same sense it is found in the *Prometheus Vinctus* of Aeschylus at line 323; and the actual phrase is found in Aeschylus *Agamemnon*, 1633, and Euripides *Bacchae*, 793. It had evidently passed from Attic literature into the common language and thought of the near east.

[12] H. H. Rowley, *The Unity of the Bible* (London, 1953), 99–100. I should also point out that Rowley says in passing (at p. 97) that just as the O.T. revelation

speciously unified exposition of scripture are due to several causes. The excessive attention to patterns and typology is in part due to a fear of reasoned and systematic doctrinal teaching, which is thought to depend too much on an alien Greek wisdom simply because it is systematic. This arouses the desire in present-day theologians to find clues in pictures rather than in propositions. There will be more to say about this later on. But there is no doubt about the main cause of the one-level exposition of scripture current today. This is certainly the rediscovery of the meaning and message of the Old Testament after long absorption in merely critical and historical study of its content.[13] This is indeed an important fact of our generation, and there has been nothing comparable to this pendulum swing in New Testament studies. Perhaps one may say that, in so far as there *has* been a comparable 'swing', the period of fragmentation on the critical side in New Testament studies has come later in time; and so the synthesis giving an overall interpretation of the New Testament is only now beginning to be achieved. The revival of Old Testament theology has naturally and necessarily affected New Testament interpretation; but it has led to too much stress on the continuities and too little stress on the contrasts. Meanwhile, intensified eschatological discussion has stressed elements within the New Testament which belong not indeed so much to the main Old Testament revelation as to Hebraic inter-testamental thought and conviction. But the whole effect has been to make doctrines and practices which are distinctively Hebraic in their setting the most luminous part for us to-day of the whole record of revelation. Cultic interests have increased the attention given to

was 'given through a Person, yet guaranteed by historical events which could not be controlled by any impostor' the same is true of the N.T. revelation. This is an important acknowledgment; but the N.T. events were less 'macroscopic'—not a visible exodus so much as a turning to the Gentiles after fruitless arguments in synagogues—a thing marked by no visible change at the time.

[13] It is still fashionable to complain that people in the churches are interested only in the New Testament and do not accept or understand the Old. But this was always a hasty and a specious diagnosis.

scripture as a record of the ongoing worship of God; but the sense of a *break* in cultus which is so clear in the epistle to the Hebrews (as it was clear to Jews and Christians alike at the time) has become obscured for us by the strong 'cultic' interests of biblical scholars.

On top of all this has come the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, a discovery popularized by *Picture Post* and television as well as by scholars writing explanatory paperbacks.[14] I need not remind you of the great volume of the serious literature the Scrolls have occasioned—a literature which Dr Rowley has so indefatigably chronicled.[15] I do not presume to make any judgment on the Scrolls themselves, but speak only as the onlooker who is said to see most of the game. I think one can fairly say that any such striking discovery is likely to assume a disproportionate importance at first and that it finds its true level of importance only later on. No doubt it is very important to have a text of some portions of the Old Testament older by eight centuries than the massoretic. This may in the end prove more important than the cryptic evidences of the ascetic community living in the isolation of the shores of the Dead Sea. It is good to have more direct and more intimate evidence than Josephus has hitherto provided on these people; but, Essenes or not and contemporaries of John the Baptist or not, they will probably be found to do no more than fill in with decisive firmness some of the hitherto shadowy outlines of the total environment in which God wrought his mighty act by

[14] I leave this paragraph as I spoke it, aware of course that it is shocking rather than dispassionate; but I think that a challenge to accepted attitudes on the Scrolls is very necessary. I mean no disrespect to the great scholars who have wrestled with the problems involved. I recognize that these problems exist and that scholars equipped for wrestling with them must continue to do so. But I think that publicity has not helped and that the sense of proportion has been lost. I would not desire any stronger statement of the position than the trenchant conclusions of Rowley himself in *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament* (London, 1957) 28–32.

[15] For material up to 1952 in the footnotes and 'list of works consulted' in *The Zadokite Fragments and the Dead Sea Scrolls*; subsequently also as editor (up to 1956) of the book-list of the Society for Old Testament Studies.

raising Jesus from the dead. The notion that they can tell us more about early Christianity than we can learn from the canonical books of the New Testament is likely to be dismissed in due time as one of the wildest of the many wild exaggerations that biblical study has known. The importance of the Scrolls for church history is probably considerably less than that of the *Didache*, which was the 'discovery' of the end of the last century but now is unduly neglected and forgotten. However, whatever the truth may be about the importance of the Scrolls, they have come to tell powerfully in support of the general conviction that one should keep to the circle of Hebrew life and thought if one is really concerned to interpret the New Testament in general and the gospels in particular. All this study of messianic prophecy and its fulfilment and of the prevalent expectation of the end of the age concentrates our attention on the Hebrew antecedents of the divine intervention in the life, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus.

But the fathers were prepared to see a wider preparation for Christ than the preparation in Israel. We may turn therefore at this point to consider the ancient conception of *praeparatio evangelica*, of previous history seen in the shape of a preparation for the coming of Christ. Perhaps the claim that any history apart from the history of Israel could be so interpreted would find little general favour today. In Israel things seem to be clearer and more established, for the inter-testamental development of eschatology and the fuller doctrine of the resurrection of the dead seem to support the contention that such experience and such preparation was indeed necessary before the true Messiah could appear. I take the liberty of quoting Dr Rowley once more:

> 'It is not merely that we have the blending of the expectation of the Messiah and the Suffering Servant and other forms of the thought of the Golden Age in relation to Christ and His work. Many other Old Testament streams run to Him and to His Church; or, if they do not run to *Him* run nowhere. ... Streams

which do not in any sense run to Judaism run to Christianity, and unless they have meaning in relation to the Church they can have no meaning at all.'[16]

But scepticism would soon begin if we took the doctrine of preparation beyond Israel, and sought to establish that the *pax Romana* was established in time for the angels to sing at Bethlehem, or that philosophy was a schoolmaster to lead the Greeks to Christ as the Law led the Jews to him. Here the secular ancient historian, who would hesitate to question the assertions we have made about the religious history of Israel, would feel entitled to express serious doubts. In these, he would be joined by those who hold that history carrying revelation within it is only to be read in God's dealing with Israel. It might, indeed, be conceded that the other peoples are to be seen as manipulated by a providence watching over Israel—'Cyrus is my shepherd', in fact; but this would be the limit of concession to those who looked for preparation for Christ in 'secular' history.

Here we must set a tantalizing limit upon our enquiry, but we may at least ask whether the nations, peoples and tribes out of which 'after the flesh' came the body of Christ under the new covenant are of no account as nations and peoples in the total story of salvation. Theologians who are only too ready to find patterns in revelation-history ought perhaps to be reminded that Toynbee is commonly execrated by his colleagues for finding broad patterns in secular history. Yet pattern may be there, and unique significance of particular events or groups of events may call for recognition. We might indeed ask what history *is* secular, and also why certain times and places are thought to be more significant than others. Greek history too has its 'scandal of particularity' if we are going to affirm that the history of the Greek

[16] H. H. Rowley, op. cit., 111–112. I believe that some scholars would hold that the Son of Man vision counted for more in the earthly ministry of Jesus than the Song of the Suffering Servant (see H. H. Rowley, op. cit., 104, 105); but if one takes the wider term 'Christ and his work' which Rowley uses, I cannot think that any Christian scholars would dissent from his conclusions.

city-states of the age from Solon to Demosthenes is in any way more important than the history of the Scythians at the same time. If one holds that Greek history at that time is particularly significant, one might go a step further and ask whether it is only by a quirk of the almanac that at the very time the Jews (or some of them) were returning from exile, Greek questioning of the nature of the universe came to take a scientific turn. We readily forget that the time in which Nehemiah rebuilt the wall of Jerusalem and Ezra proclaimed the law from his wooden pulpit was the time in which the Greeks repelled the Persians, Socrates was born, Aeschylus and Sophocles produced their tragedies and Pericles instigated the building of the Parthenon. Two groups of events, each of very great later importance, were happening contemporaneously but in complete isolation and insulation each from the other. Is there any divine strategy to be detected here in the light of revelation?

These are fascinating questions, but we must not allow ourselves to be further fascinated by them at present. The only immediate relevance to our theme lies in the effect of what happened then in Greece on the Greeks who entered the church. It is the fact that what we call 'Greek' in later antiquity was indelibly influenced by what happened in Greece itself in this significant classical period. The later Hellenic culture might be skin-deep and might be imposed on the unwilling by what any good Athenian democrat would detest as a tyrannical exercise of power; and yet what *was* stamped on even this second or third-hand article was a character derived, however remotely, from a small number of people formed by a special development and tradition in separated city-state units in the four or perhaps five centuries before Alexander the Great. We shall see how persistent this character was when we consider the 'ordinary Greek' meeting the gospel nearly four centuries later.

Our more direct concern is, however, with the immediate historical setting of Calvary, the empty tomb and Pentecost. It might indeed be said that to speak of an 'historical setting' in this

way is unsound, and might seem to limit divine sovereignty and deny the 'otherness' of the word. It is, of course, necessary to beware of facile human demonstrations that it had to happen then and there; but on the other hand we do not really glorify God by representing his interventions as other-worldly unpredictable atomic bombs destroying every frame of reference. Preachers who attempt to relate the year that king Uzziah died to the vision of Isaiah are not necessarily to be dismissed with contempt. If they *are* to be dismissed, we have to revive our understanding of the prophets very drastically. At any rate, it is legitimate and instructive to show how the effects of God's acts in history took one form rather than any other because of the total environmental situation at the time of his act. Old Testament theology has turned from the study of Israel in her historical setting in the near east to theological interpretation of her covenant relationship with Jahweh, but in spite of this, no Old Testament interpreter would deny that the exodus, the occupation of Canaan, the exile and the return are, as facts of history, relevant to the story of the covenant relationship. If so much is commonly agreed, must we not also consider the relevance of the total historical situation at the time of God's coming to us in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus?

It is here that the concentration on Hebrew factors, and especially on Palestinian Jewish factors, which the most recent biblical scholarship has shown is likely to become seriously misleading. For it ends by presenting us with an unbalanced picture. We ought not to under-estimate or to neglect any of this new evidence, but we ought to get the situation into proportion and cease to imagine that the Palestinian story tells us all that we ought to know if we are to read the canonical books of the New Testament with historical insight. Furthermore, what is much more serious, undue concentration on contemporary Judaism impedes us in declaring and interpreting what God actually did in our Lord's coming. We are impeded by it from gaining a full understanding of the media he chose to make known his mighty acts

among the peoples of the earth.[17] Messianic studies and rabbinic parallels to synoptic materials, however interesting in themselves, will never explain the Acts of the Apostles. Our present purpose is not to force Greek elements into the story but to point to what is manifestly there already. But our purpose, if we are true to the record, must also be to try to show what is meant by saying that there is neither Jew nor Greek in Christ. Clearly there *were* both Jews and Greeks in the membership of the early churches: what does it mean to say that in Christ there is neither of them or that there are both of them indifferently?

There is a very remarkable phrase in the ninth chapter of the epistle to the Romans where Paul is listing the advantages of Jews over Gentiles even within the Christian fellowship: 'of whom', he says of the Jews, 'came Christ as concerning the flesh'—*κατὰ σάρκα*.[18] This and the similar saying in the second letter to the Corinthians must not be pressed to mean that the Davidic descent, the identification with the preaching of John, the rejection by the chief priests and elders of the people, or even involvement in the curse of him who hangs upon a tree are to be neglected in a full Christian gospel. It does not mean either that these things no longer belong to the life of the risen high priest in his heavenly intercession. It is rather that these things have their meaning because in Jesus himself God has acted anew at a level which transforms the significance of what they which were at Jerusalem and their rulers did. If this were not so, how could he that is least in the kingdom of heaven be greater than John the Baptist? To this rather strange new kingdom of heaven, looking more like a very little flock, they had come from the north and from the south, from the

[17] This is not to underestimate the value of a great book (W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*) which illuminates the way the Rabbi became more than a Rabbi, as part of the calling of the Gentiles.

[18] Romans 9. 5, 2 Cor. 5. 16. It is quite impossible to enter on the vast questions of interpretation here. I indicate my understanding of the Romans 9 passage by seeing it in close relation to the Corinthians passage, even closer than to Romans 1. 3, 4., though naturally that must also be considered. Other Pauline uses of *κατὰ σάρκα* are different, though closer study of *σάρξ* in N.T. usage will probably cause them all to be seen as natural variants of one main meaning.

east and from the west to sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Now it will here be said: 'What does this mean? Does it not mean that though the personnel of the early churches might be Greek or Barbarian, Scythian or what you will—their life and thought were in essence Hebraic? How else could these incomers sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob?' Likewise, in the eleventh chapter of that same epistle to the Romans Paul, in supreme disdain of the facts of arboriculture, says that the Gentiles are grafted like the wild olive (a particularly Greek tree, incidentally) into God's good cultivated olive tree; but they must remember that they do not sustain the root but the root sustains them. Are not all who are in Christ incorporated in the rod of the stem of Jesse, the branch that comes from his root? Are there not Jesse windows in our cathedrals?

The whole weight of the earliest Christian experience and the natural tendency of the earliest preaching was to the affirmation of a Saviour born in the city of David, of David's household and lineage. Even Ephesians still insists that aliens from the commonwealth of Israel had become fellow-citizens with the saints. Yet their struggles with this natural and inevitable picture of the Gentile Christians as grafted into Israel brought to the early Christians an increasing sense that the gospel has made *all things* new and that a new creation is evident where *any man* is in Christ Jesus: 'To the Jew first, but also to the Greek' Paul says when he looks at the matter from his own historical and traditional standpoint; but as soon as he goes on to expound Christian doctrine, we learn that 'he is not a Jew who is one outwardly', and from that we reach the conclusion that all have sinned and come short, and all are freely justified. The hair's breadth of a preposition[19]

[19] ἐκ and διά, at Romans 3. 30. The older explanations seem to make too much of this: one particularly doubts Sanday and Headlam, ad loc. They say Jews are justified ἐκ πίστεως διὰ περιτομῆς, Gentiles ⟨ἐκ καὶ⟩ διὰ πίστεως. But this seems to contravene the basic principle of the passage, which effectively asserts, like Galatians 6. 15, that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision count in Christ. But we ought not to regard the difference of preposition as unintended and merely stylistic, even so.

still seeks to distinguish how faith operates in the case of Jews and Gentiles, but all is of faith and faith alone. We must not forget that the *sola fide* affirmation of Luther and the reformers was first reached by Paul when he declared what God had done in creating Jews and Gentiles anew in Christ by a common and equal justification by faith. Even in the eleventh chapter of Romans in the passage to which we have already referred, in a context expressing his agony of spirit over his fellow Jews, Paul insists that faith or its lack is the sole criterion of vital connection with God: the Gentiles are now in a succession of faith, walking with God as the fathers did and so inheriting their blessings.[20] One must no more put undue stress on this passage and make it declare the way of faith to be essentially Hebraic than one must unduly extend the meaning of the other sayings that Jesus himself was a Hebrew only 'as concerning the flesh'. Nevertheless, it will be said in reply, scripture testifies to covenant relationship; and this relationship is developed rather than annulled in the new covenant. I know that some interpreters feel that the gracious self-disclosure of God in a covenant relation with his people, according to their faith in each age and generation, is the heart of everything; and they think that this is inexpressible in any language but Hebrew. No one can ever deny that this gracious disclosure was first made in the covenant with Israel and so in Hebrew language, which was the language Israel spoke. But the day of Pentecost when it was fully gone showed that God is not and has never been of one tongue. Many of Israel's braver sons had believed and taught that God would judge Israel by at least the same standards of righteousness by which he judged the Gentiles; and as with judgment so with mercy—this was for the Gentiles too. Ezekiel can tell Israel that God will not restore her for her own sake (Ez. 36. 32). Perhaps a few of the prophets even got beyond the natural conviction of

[20] Karl Barth's commentary on Romans 11. 17, 18 is especially valuable in stating the doctrine in terms more likely to come home to us, the ecclesiastic and the 'concerned' non-ecclesiastic led alike to repentance and faith. See also his general summing up, on 11. 28–32. (Karl Barth, *Der Römerbrief*, Munich 1921; translated by E. C. Hoskyns, Oxford, 1933, 408–12.)

their fellow-prophets that the Gentiles would have to come to Jerusalem for their fuller light and that it must be from Zion that the law would go forth to inaugurate the era of world peace. Jonah is the most striking example. God's concern for the six-score thousand persons of Nineveh who cannot discern between their right hand and their left does indeed bring them to repentance and faith, but not apparently to pilgrimages to Jerusalem for the Passover. It is, to quote Dr Rowley once again, only to be expected that God's fulfilment of prophetic insights will go beyond even what the prophet could speak, though even so God's act will be recognized as its fulfilment. In this sense the new covenant went beyond its Jeremianic foretelling: it was not only inward and personal in a new sense, it was also universal, in a new sense; and it was not 'with the house of Israel and the house of Judah' in any sense in which the prophet himself can have understood those words.

We are thinking now of a truth whose dramatic revelation dominates the Acts and colours all the Pauline letters; it is less dramatically dominant in the synoptics, and the fourth gospel represents the calm on the other side of the conflict. But conflict it undoubtedly was, a story chiefly of conflict of human wills and traditions with God's newly declared purpose; though, at the more superficial level it might be seen first as a conflict between the Jews of the time and the followers of Jesus and next as a conflict between the Judaisers in the church and Paul as apostle to the Gentiles.[21] But it was in fact the Spirit contending with the traditions of the church. This conflict was particular and passing, sharp and short. It falls in history between Pentecost and the Roman destruction of Jerusalem. What one may call the 'long-term' tension between Judaism and Christianity is another story. I refrain from entering upon it except to say that I know and

[21] J. C. Leuba no doubt overstated the extent of this conflict, going beyond what is actually said in Galatians: but the writer in the recently revised Peake Commentary understates it; see the review of the new *Peake* by N. S. Moon in *Baptist Quarterly*, xix (July 1962), 330–2.

deeply respect several devout Jews and that I loathe anti-Semitism; and, in particular, that one of the wartime occupations which taught me a great deal was that of obtaining and selling passover bread for the refugee Jews in Cambridge. I am sure, however, that well-meaning attempts to minimize the differences between Judaism and Christianity (though motivated often by a proper sense of guilt for past persecutions of Jews by Christians) do no good and may do harm; for almost always they fail to acknowledge sufficiently what God did when he established the new covenant with us in our Lord Jesus Christ. One does not show disrespect for old wine or for old wineskins in acknowledging the arrival of new wine which bursts the old skins.

Dr Winter has recently made a careful study of the synoptic accounts of the trial of Jesus which seems to show that Roman action on political grounds really had more to do with his condemnation than Jewish action on religious grounds.[22] Winter suggests that the Christian evangelists writing after the destruction of Jerusalem tended to stress the religious conflict and minimize the political in order to conciliate Roman favour. This is an important and interesting thesis which deserves to be studied as carefully and impartially as any thesis can be studied. I regret, however, a tendency to clutch at it as a means of softening the account of antagonism between Jews and Christians in the critical years before Jerusalem was destroyed. After all Paul never lived to see Jerusalem fall, and his Roman citizenship was hardly likely to affect his thought at this level, even if it affects considerably what he says in the thirteenth chapter of the epistle to the Romans. Yet the Pauline letters support the Acts account absolutely and in detail on the conflict both with the Jews and with Judaizing Christians. There was no need to placate the Romans when writing to the members of the churches of Galatia, and we rightly look to the epistle to the Galatians as primary evidence on the basic issues.

It would be more profitable to attempt to understand what in

[22] P. Winter, *On the Trial of Jesus*, Berlin, 1961.

fact scandalized the Jews in the Christian message and what in fact lay behind the efforts of the Christians who wanted Gentile converts to keep the full law. Every Jew believed that God is the same yesterday, today and for ever; but to say 'Joshua the Messiah is the same yesterday, today and for ever' cannot but sound blasphemous in the ears of those who recognize in this Joshua only the man whom the Romans had crucified on the eve of a recent passover, and who had *not* returned in the heavens on clouds of glory even if his followers believed him to be risen from the dead. The disciples themselves needed to have unfolded to them the Old Testament scriptures which proved that Christ must suffer and so enter into his glory: is it surprising, then, that, as Paul put it, 'So they which dwell at Jerusalem and their rulers, because they knew him not nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath day, fulfilled them by condemning him'? This (with its note of tragic irony that reminds one of the Greek tragedians) must be understood and accepted by all who accept the Christian revelation.

But the more important outward conflict was not between Christians and Jews, even in these years of conflict; it was between the Judaizing Christians and the converts in the cosmopolitan Hellenistic cities. I cannot attempt even to sketch the history of these early Christian societies, and there is no need to do so here; but I would like to refer to the essay by Mr E. A. Judge, now of the University of Sydney, which is entitled *The Social Pattern of the Christian Groups in the First Century*. This is a model of ancient history written impartially but with sensitivity from the Christian point of view; and Mr Judge draws upon the various writings of Professor A. H. M. Jones on the political situation in the eastern Roman provinces.[23] Yet even all this study, important as it is, does not bring us to the heart of the matter. Judaism had been a proselytizing religion now for some time, and continued to be so until Jerusalem fell. Synagogues were to be found all over the Roman world and especially in the near east. These synagogues

[23] For these, see the bibliography.

provided the natural hearers of the first Christian proclamation. All this cannot be accident any more than the centring of the gospel events in Jerusalem can be accidental. Thus we see the providential purpose in the return to Jerusalem with the consequent faithful witness of Maccabean martyrs against the attempt to enforce Hellenic ways there and then. But we see purpose also in the wideness of the dispersion of the Jews among the cities of the Hellenic world, where Jews were well content to enjoy the citizenship if they could get it or settlers' rights if they could not. Alexandria was the chief place of meeting with the Greek tradition: the Alexandrian Jews had a synagogue in Jerusalem itself. No doubt the stricter Pharisees eyed it askance, but God can be seen now to have been working both through hard-shell particularism at Jerusalem and through the more tolerant life of the synagogues in the great cities which welcomed the god-fearer whether or not he ever became a proselyte. Yet if a man did go on to be a proselyte, he must be circumcised and accept all Jewish obligations; and pilgrimages to Jerusalem for the great feast were made even from the most liberal-minded of the local synagogues.

The Jews themselves seem to have been shy of taking upon themselves the responsibility for translating the Old Testament into Greek: both the stories of pseudo-Aristeas and Aristobulus fix the responsibility firmly on Ptolemy. Whatever the truth here, there is no doubt that the synagogues exploited Ptolemy's initiative for the benefit of their members, and probably there was a gradual extension of the translation during the proselytizing centuries up to the time of our Lord's ministry itself. Was this only Ptolemy's plan for his library? Did not the acceptance of the need for translation of the inviolate Hebrew into a language understanded of the people mean, in a real sense, an admission of Greeks to a potential fellow-citizenship with the Jews? Perhaps a dim awareness of what was involved in this respect in the work of translation led to the desire to attach the responsibility for it to Ptolemy's command. Present-day New Testament scholars are chiefly intent on detecting the Aramaic and the Hebrew behind

the Greek and in regretting, as some of the Rabbis must have regretted, that it had to be put into a Greek translation at all. But the actual historical calling of the first Christians in the great cities—Greeks or Jews—to be saints in Christ Jesus would have been hardly thinkable without Greek speech and a Greek Old Testament. Whom God called he foreknew, and the Septuagint was a necessary factor in his call. We see this clearly as we look back at the story of the Acts and the letters of the New Testament.

The dispersion, the Septuagint, the political life of the virtually self-governing Hellenistic cities with a Greek pattern of government; and then an apostle to the Gentiles who came from one of these cities being himself a Roman citizen also, but who was a strict Pharisee and as touching the righteousness according to the Law blameless—all this, no less than the Maccabean witness and the eschatological fervour in Palestine, were available to receive and embody the proclamation of the new age. The Greeks were not admitted to the church in the same sense that god-fearers and proselytes were admitted to the life of Judaism: they were incorporated with those who after the flesh and after the Spirit had hitherto relied on the blessings of the old covenant. At this moment in the story, the newness of the covenant was more significant to the body of believers than the fact that it still was a covenant. Indeed, for them, the covenant was so new as to mark the end of the age: when they met to remember the Lord's death 'till he come', they looked for the fullness of the new age in that coming as likely to break in upon mankind at any time. In our modern biblical thought we have had to rediscover the meaning of 'covenant' as such, and we have every reason to be thankful for this rediscovery. But this has its dangers too, for we are likely to fail to understand fully why the new covenant is new, and how new it is, not only for the first generations of Christian believers but for all who believe in Christ Jesus between the Easter events and the second coming. Our Puritan fathers when they were discussing sacerdotalism, both in ancient Israel and in contemporary Britain, were more alive to these matters.

We can see how those directly involved were only partially aware of what had happened; that it was too big for them to grasp. The Jews in the Hellenic cities who at first listened to Paul's expositions in synagogue worship, were understandably incensed by the institution of a rival synagogue which made no demand of circumcision upon proselytes and so had an apparently much less costly demand to make on its Gentile initiates than that of the synagogue. The first Christian believers in Jerusalem were very understandably perturbed at so rapid a development of the Gentile mission. The statesmanship of James at the Jerusalem council and Paul's willingness, on his return there to report on his mission, to purify himself along with the four men who had a vow on them, are notable evidence of the tension and the cohesion of the church at that time. We have to remember constantly how Jewish the apostle to the Gentiles was. Only then can we assess adequately the autobiographical part of Philippians and the whole import of Galatians. These may be old familiar things to say, but the weight laid by recent scholarship on the Hebrew antecedents of Paul's teaching make it all the more needful to say these familiar things again and again. The demands of his apostleship to the Gentiles were indeed wrung from him in the actual crises of his ministry. What he did, both in public action and in church relationships, reveals the new life of the church even more than his arguments reveal it.

So through much travail God called Jew and Greek into the new covenant of grace together. We must therefore look at these Greeks who were born again in Christ. But there is another question to be answered before we do so. What right have we to speak like this of the Greeks alongside the Jews as being apparently a privileged and distinct class of Gentiles? Does this special distinction belong only to Paul's way of speaking of the matter and not to real church history? Have modern analysts, ready to distinguish Hebraic from Hellenic, been too quick to follow this lead of Paul? As far as the scope of the new covenant is concerned, some caution is needed here. Barbarian and Scythian as

well as Greek and Jew are all one in Christ Jesus. To be Greek is not in itself any more a claim to grace than to be a Jew. But the calling of the Greeks had its special importance even so, and it is this that I hope to examine under particular headings in the subsequent lectures. Let us simply note that 'Greeks' in some places in the New Testament does stand simply for all 'Gentiles', and that in others it may stand (as the word 'Hellenists' certainly does in our English authorized version) for Jews speaking Greek and living mostly in the dispersion but not necessarily outside Palestine. But after safeguarding ourselves on all these matters we can still say that the famous words 'the Jews seek a sign, the Greeks seek wisdom' imply something which is not merely a rhetorical antithesis but a recognition of fact which has to do with life in the early Christian church as well as with the general life of men and women outside it. These first Greek converts were not philosophers, as we have already said. They were not even the earliest converts who provided the 'test cases' for the original Jerusalem Christians: we hear of the Ethiopian and the Roman officer first in the story of the Acts. Yet with the progress of the mission, the significance of the calling of the Greeks had to be faced; and it is this we must now go on to consider.

CHAPTER II

The 'Ordinary' Greek and the Gospel

TO give meaning to the word 'ordinary' as used of a Greek is almost impossible. We all know that no one is 'ordinary' and that the average man is faceless; we also know how easily the image (as it is now fashionable to call it) of particular nationalities can become totally unreliable. The Scotsmen and Welshmen of comedy are obvious cases of this distorting generalization. But there are several further difficulties in trying to portray the 'ordinary' Greek. It means taking the greatest common measure of men of vivid individuality who lived their lives out through a thousand years all over the Aegean basin. Yet Homer's heroes and the characters of Lucian's dialogues are literary portraits a thousand years apart of human types that one can recognize as being in some real sense 'Greek'.[1] We have literary, inscriptional, and non-literary papyrus evidence to sift, and we do well not to trust the literary evidence alone since the classical writers came in the main from the social élite rather from the generality of the people. As New Testament scholars were quick to see, papyrus remains of ordinary human transactions entered into by unliterary people are a useful source of evidence. They are good evidence for life as well as for language. It is interesting, for instance, to see how they illustrate the practice of adoption, of *υἱοθεσία*, which Paul uses as a description of the relation of the Christian believer to God.[2] Adoption was not a Jewish practice,

[1] The word 'Greek' itself has a strange history. It is generally considered to be derived from the Latinization of the name of one of the Boeotian clans which entered into the settlement of Cumae, the nearest Greek settlement to Rome. Its triumph in our usage indicates the triumph of Latin in the west and in English education. 'Hellenic' and 'Hellene' ought to be used.

[2] For a full account of material in the literary authors, inscriptions and papyrus fragments throwing light on *υἱοθεσία* in the New Testament, see the article in *Hermes*, vol. lxv (1930), 167–76, by Astrid Wenzel. She deals chiefly with

but it was both Roman and Greek; and one may be sure that it is to this common practice within the family experience of his hearers to which Paul is referring in Romans and Galatians rather than to the notion that the king was the adopted son of God. This would be remote from Paul however interesting it is to our present-day orientalists.[3]

There are, however, dangers inherent in the quest of the 'ordinary' Greek as soon as we seek to interpret our evidence about him. We must beware of modern pictures of the Greeks based on modern notions and ideologies. The Florentines had one idealized picture of the Greeks, the eighteenth century Germans another; and neither will stand the test of ancient history seriously studied. The German picture affected many of their industrious and voluminous scholars of the nineteenth century; and they even encouraged our own Matthew Arnold to think of the Hellenes as full of sweetness and light, seeing life steadily and seeing it whole. We must recognize however, that in general the classical tradition of this country has been sober and realistic, usually more Roman than Greek in its spirit and interests.[4] Coleridge and his friends courted a really Greek notion, pantisocracy, the equal rule of all, and planned a pantisocratic community on the banks of the Susquehanna in Pennsylvania; but Coleridge soon found himself

evidence for Greek and Roman practice; but there happens to be much evidence from Rhodes, which is close to the great cities of the Asia Minor coast.

[3] The writer to the Hebrews does, indeed, make full use of Psalm 2 and Psalm 110 in respect to the standing and dignity of Jesus as well as in connection with priesthood after the order of Melchizedek. But the Pauline passages clearly belong to another field of thought, connected with common legal practice, as is shown also in Paul's word *συγκληρονόμοι* (joint-heirs). The Pauline passages, moreover, concern the new status of the believer (by adoption): the author to the Hebrews, following the Psalms, says nothing of this. L. H. Marshall briefly states the importance of this doctrine of 'Adoption' in *The Challenge of New Testament Ethics* (London, 1946), 258–9.

[4] 'Greek, sir,' said Dr Johnson, 'is like lace. A man gets as much as he can of it.' Shakespeare was not alone in having a little Latin and less Greek. This is still to be seen in the comparative figures for Latin and Greek at the advanced level of the General Certificate of Education, though Greek seems now to be stabilized and even shows some improvement.

in Jesus Lane, Cambridge instead of Jesus College. The Greece of Coleridge, Keats and Shelley has some measure of real warrant in fact; Byron did actually die trying to ally himself with the Greek liberation movement in a way it seems harsh to call mere romanticism; but one can very confidently say that none of the early Greek members of the Christian church had the attitude to life these men attributed to the Greeks. Our English poets might well have been disappointed if they had been personally introduced to some of these early church members.

Even ancient historians have their prejudices and tend to read modern issues into ancient life on its political side: thus Mitford and Grote took violently opposed sides on Greek political history from different sides of nineteenth century politics; and Mommsen in Germany championed Julius Caesar in the same spirit of *parti pris*. The marked tendency of historians of Greece to concentrate on the centuries when Athens was independent and important is natural enough in view of the abundant literary evidence and its agreed excellence as literature. Most recently this has changed, and inscriptions and lists have come to be regarded as more important, because more objective, evidence even of the 'golden age' of Greek states. But one cannot in fact evade value-judgments on history, and contemporary value-judgments, like those of Aristophanes or Plato, are likely to be of real importance for a historian.[5]

The Greek world after Alexander has not until recently received the close attention it merits because of our concentration on the great ages of city-state independence. The interest in Alexander himself and his conquests and in the dynastic side of the subsequent history, and particularly the question of ruler worship, has had somewhat undue predominance in the studies of the Hellenistic world that have been made. This has led to the

[5] The recent Thinker's Library composite publication called *The Greeks* represents a reaction against Matthew Arnold and the Romantics, as well as against Gilbert Murray, in the present generation of scholars; but the authors are no less convinced of the lasting importance of the Greeks even when viewed in a 'tougher' more realistic light.

common notion that the Greek city-state, the *polis*, came to the end of its significant life with conquests of Alexander. But this is simply not true; one could almost say that it is the reverse of the truth. Throughout Egypt, and especially throughout the eastern empire which fell to the Seleucids, one *polis* after another was established and the great ancient cities, like Ephesus, were confirmed in independent life. Of course they had an overlord, but the Macedonians wished to prove that they were Hellenes and were not the crude northern barbarians that some of the more civilized Greeks had always thought them to be. Thus a careful and mutual understanding governed the relationships of the Macedonians with the various cities of their new empire. The cities had officers and assemblies on the best Greek models, and often they had their own terrain or hinterland which they controlled as securely as Athens controlled Attica. Professor A. H. M. Jones has made valuable studies of these cities and of Hellenistic Greek city life in general; and we may hope that now scholars will be more open-eyed and able to read between the lines of extant literature as well as evaluating the abundant inscriptional evidence.[6]

Ruler-worship was something looked upon by Greeks of the classical age with abhorrence: obeisance to the Great King was left to the barbarians. When Agamemnon is to be led to his doom in Aeschlylus's play, he first disclaims this oriental obeisance but then is coaxed by the queen into the fatal treading of the purple vestments that belong only to the honouring of the gods; and so instant doom cannot but fall on this over-proud conqueror of Troy. With the advent of the dynastic successors of Alexander in Egypt and in Asia, this tradition was to some extent abandoned. Titles like 'Benefactor', which our Lord referred to satirically in teaching his followers to be servants, gave some sanction to a

[6] The works are listed in the bibliography: one may also dig out relevant material from Rostovtzeff, *Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire* (second edition revised 1957). One notes with pleasure the very considerable evidence for social and political life of the Greek cities in the near east in the second century A.D. that Mr B. Baldwin has extracted from the dialogues of Lucian and published in 1961 in the *Classical Quarterly*, xi (N.S.), 199–208.

belief in a kind of super-human status in the ruler as a Protector. But this status in no way affected the vigorous political life of the city-states of the empire, nor did it affect the strictly political level of their dealings with these same rulers on matters of public policy. The Roman emperors did not disdain the title of *divus* or discountenance worship of the imperial bust, though they generally showed no eagerness to promote this worship and were content to have their predecessors deified. Their own awareness of their limitations is well shown in the story of Vespasian, who, as he realized that his last illness was upon him, sighed, 'I'm afraid I'm becoming a god'. Even so the dynastic principle did come to dominate the whole empire and especially its eastern part; and as a result of it in the east Rome of Byzantium this tendency coloured the whole history of the eastern church and of the eastern empire. Nevertheless, there was always a strong civil service at Byzantium which checked imperial pretensions and was very limited in its obeisances.[7] An intolerance of domination is still ingrained in Greeks after all the racial admixtures and political upheavals they have known. A story told by Kinglake, the nineteenth century English traveller, bring this character very sharply into focus.[8] Kinglake sailed from Smyrna to Limasol in Cyprus through forty mid-winter days. There was a Hydriot mate who was a natural leader of any malcontents. A crucial moment came when by holding course only another half hour the ship could make calm water under the lee of Cyprus. But the gale was growing in fury, and with it the fury of the crew at such foolhardiness. Kinglake says:

> 'It was a crew no longer, but rather a gathering of Greek citizens. The shout of the seamen was changed for the murmuring of the people—the spirit of the old Demos was alive.'

[7] See the essay by Wilhelm Ensslin at pp. 268 to 308 of the essays edited by N. H. Baines and H. St. L. B. Moss and called *Byzantium* (now issued as Oxford Paperback No. 16); and see also what Baines says in his introductory essay, xvi–xxii. See also Steven Runciman, *Byazantine Civilization* (Methuen, University Paperback edition), 89–93.

[8] A. W. Kinglake, *Eothen*, chapter vi.

The captain turns to eloquence, not to brute force. His voice and his whole body urge passionately that there is safety in holding on, if Greeks will be brave. The crew waver, resolve and waver again 'hanging between the terrors of the storm and the persuasion of glorious speech', but the brave words win and the brigantine lands at Limasol.

Here at last we may feel that we have made some contact with the 'ordinary' Greek and that some of the distinguishing marks of the first Greek church members are beginning to be visible. One is almost driven to arbitrary selection of such characteristics when surveying so wide a field, and I propose to select political awareness, freedom of speech, and what might perhaps be called versatility for want of a better single description. When Aristotle said that a man is a political animal he did not mean only that: he meant that man is a living creature whose fullness of life requires participation in the life of a city-state. This is as common a Greek insight as any: for the Greeks, village life or life on the estate of an overlord was not true life; and a slave could not be a complete man. This view of the political framework as natural and necessary—the framework that is, of a constitutionally organized and locally centred government which included all citizens—was the universally accepted view of the Hellenistic world. It was the standard from which any deviations had to be justified. The early Greek Christians may not even have been citizens in many cases, though it is dangerous, as Mr Judge admirably shows in his essay, to press Paul's words to the Corinthians to mean that all the early Christians were under-privileged members of society. Even if they were not citizens, they were brought up in a city-state environment and unconsciously accepted its desirability. But there is a further matter to consider which is even more important from the standpoint of early Christianity. The Athenian constitution, traditionally associated with the reforms of Solon shortly after 600 B.C., had marked the triumph of the *polis* as the normal basis of society in two ways: it had subordinated the still very great power of the household to the public law, and it had been strong

enough to permit the establishment and continuance of spontaneous unofficial societies within the *polis* so long as these did not infringe the public law. These *thiasoi*, as they were called, were often centred in some form of worship; though even so they soon tended to be social in character and to exist for the mutual benefit of members and sometimes mainly for their conviviality. The wide toleration of such societies within itself was one of the merits of the Greek city-state which the Romans tended to formalize in the form of acknowledged legal corporations; and much of the good that European life has derived from Greece and Rome has come through such societies and corporations. We can be sure that the eastern Hellenistic cities were full of them. In a kind of reverse acknowledgment of this toleration, the special societies, at any rate among the Greeks, tended to have their own constitutions modelled as far as circumstances allowed on the constitution of the city-state. Where they were real cult societies, their officials were of course chosen according to the rites of the cult concerned; but one may doubt whether the early Christian groups were any political novelty in their internal order. Mr Judge shows that Luke's account of the Jerusalem council shows it as remarkably correct according to Greek constitutional procedures; in fact it was probably more truly constitutional than later general councils of the church. We must of course allow that Luke read the 'minutes' of the council, if we may so call them, with Greek constitutional practices in mind; but if so, this is all the more significant evidence for the general habits of the churches of the Hellenistic world. In the election of Matthias to take the place of Judas among the apostles we find a clear case of κλήρωσις ἐκ προκρίτων used by the Athenians in many cases of election to office and recorded in the Aristotelian *Constitution of Athens*.[9] From a chosen number of candidates the actual office-bearer was selected by lot: such was the manner of choice, as far as the church's action was concerned, between Joseph

[9] Aristotle, *Constitution of Athens* viii, 1, where it is said of Solon, τὰς δ' ἀρχὰς ἐποίησε κληρωτὰς ἐκ προκρίτων.

surnamed Justus and Matthias. In summing this up I will quote one more general conclusion from Mr Judge's essay:

> 'Whatever the original Jerusalem group may have thought about the character of their society and its government, and whatever affinities it may have had with contemporary Palestinian religious movements, the person who wrote up its affairs a generation later for the information of a Hellenistic public presented it in terms that could not fail to identify it as a religious association of the kind familiar to them.'[10]

We learn then, not only that the ordinary Greek was political but that he remained political after baptism. Was this, then, the beginning of corruption, or was it a true mark of the body then brought into being as the body of Christ? We are often told today that the church is a theocracy and not a democracy, and that the practice of voting in church meetings is an open invitation to the Evil One to disturb the flock and divide it. We no longer seem to be as certain as the Puritans were that an insistence on the crown rights of the Redeemer in his church is entirely consistent with a church order in which all believers participate responsibly in church government. For the first believers Christ was the head, and his commands must be heard and obeyed. In this sense, and it is a real sense, all believers were, like Paul, slaves of Christ, not their own but bought with a price. But this did not obviate the need for church officers or for Christian deliberation. The will of Christ had to be understood within the corporate life of the church, wherein each was to prophesy according to the measure of faith and each esteem other better than himself.

In fact church order is not something extraneous but ought to be seen to grow out of the faith of the church; and an order in which no real responsibility lies with the generality of the membership for the decisions of the church can never be really consistent with the royal priesthood and the peculiar people. Hebrew and Greek elements intermingle in the New Testament *ecclesia*. There

[10] Op. cit., 45.

is no doubt that in the first Christian generations the contemporary synagogues would see this as a fact and would regard this very thing as one of the dangers of the new sect.

This is not to say that democracy as such has a divine right or that a democratic church order is ever likely to work well in a church that still lives in this present age and has done no more than taste the powers of the age to come. Alcibiades, the brilliant young Athenian living in the next generation to Pericles, already called democracy an admitted folly, and the Athenian democracy shortly after (or rather the Athenian hyper-democratic judicial procedure) condemned Socrates to death. But we tend to forget in our impatience over these admitted follies both the failings of autocracy and oligarchy (especially where these claim divine sanction for their own acts of power) and the merits of a democracy when it is really 'involved' and committed to its decisions. Lord Lindsay in his study of the modern democratic state[11] suggested that among us democratic ideals and procedure owe rather more to the more 'left-wing' churches of the seventeenth century than to the exponents of the principles of the French Revolution. If this is so (and the early history of trade union meetings in nonconformist chapel vestries in the nineteenth century might offer supporting evidence for the claim) the implication may be that democracy is only safe and only fully possible when the church truly is the church. It is a pity that at a time when the several Christian traditions are entering into conversations in all seriousness, we are so timid about our own heritage in this respect. *Koinonia*, the word for the common life in Christ, also stood in Greek for the voluntary association for mutual benefit; and in it all its members shared responsibly. The common life in Christ and the sharing which is of the Holy Spirit mean a transforming and indeed a new creation of such human *Koinoniai*; but it is wrong to suppose that the divine grace will obliterate the human interrelationship: rather it will cement it. It might be

[11] A. D. Lindsay, *The Modern Democratic State* (London, 1943. Royal Institute of International Affairs). See especially pages 115 to 146.

claimed that in real brotherhood there will be no constitution at all and no need for one; this reminds one of Plato's myth of the age of Kronos in his dialogue *The Statesman*.[12] In that era there were no constitutions and man dwelt at peace with the animals under divine under-shepherds. But Plato knew that he and his fellows did not live in the age of Kronos and therefore a right constitution and a true statesman must be found. God has not called the church to live in the age to come exclusively, but rather by the powers of the age to come under conditions of the present age. In this tension a constitutional church system which enjoins upon all its members responsibility for a share in the decisions which the church must make has a double significance. In one way it limits frailty and checks in some measure the havoc that can be wrought when any one member or small caucus attempts to lord it over the flock. In another way it educates the fellowship towards full *Koinonia* in Christ through the Holy Spirit.

At any rate church constitutions agreeable to the life and work of the first Christian communities can be seen to have had a form that recalls many features of the Greek *polis*. Later conditions aided the growth of the monarchic episcopate. We ought not to argue from this that a literal and detailed restitution of the first century constitutional order is necessary for the effective existence of a true church; but if we really believe in scriptual guidance in these matters, we ought to be conceding reluctantly to our Christian brethren that perhaps a democratic church constitution (in this rather wide sense of 'democracy' meaning a common arriving at decisions) may not be of the *esse* of the church. We ought to be telling our brethren of other traditions that such a constitution does belong to its *bene esse*, and also perhaps to its *plene esse*. The earliest Greek believers would have been convinced that this is so, and this conviction was not a survival of their unregenerate past.

Here one should note the discussion of the word *ecclesia* which has been very widespread in recent years. Its relation to the calling

[12] I have enlarged on this in my *Plato's Statesman* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, paperback edition), 54–56. The passage is *Politicus*, 271 e.

of God and the called company of Israel is no doubt the dominant theme in the New Testament as it is the sole theme of the Old Testament. But one must not be too strict and too antiseptically 'Hebraic' in dealing with its New Testament significance. The word would have overtones of its secular meaning when used by Christians in all the cities of Greece and the Near East. There are passages (Hebrews 12. 23 being the most important) where the ordinary Greek meaning 'citizen assembly' enters necessarily into the meaning of the passage. One may note here in passing how that wonderful epistle combines the political feeling of the Hellenistic world with the religious faith and traditions of Judaism as it makes its exposition of the nature of the new and living way. But words gather meaning from all sides, and *ecclesia*, though meaning for the Greek believer as for the Jew 'the people called out by God in Christ' would also naturally come to mean, for those used to the normal secular meaning, a new and a truer citizen assembly than any upon earth. Their citizenship was in heaven, and it did not matter if some of them were strangers and pilgrims, being literally without earthly citizenship; for even the brethren who had such earthly citizenship were in the Christian sense strangers and pilgrims, and they were so just because God had prepared for them a more abiding city.

Embedded in the most Jewish sacrificial language of this same writer we find another Greek word that awakes memories: we have *boldness* to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus; not ἐξουσία as we might have expected but παρρησία is the word used.

Here is the contrast to Israel entreating that the word be spoken no more from the mountain which even a beast must be slain for touching. And the word παρρησία is the word the Greeks used for 'freedom of speech', the right to express an opinion in public and especially in the assembly. Tyranny was the suppression of παρρησία, but in a democratic assembly the herald cried out 'Who wishes to address the meeting?' and any citizen present might do so. To be brought near to Christ, to be adopted into

filial relationship, was to be entitled to speak in the very presence of the Holy One, not indeed out of any merit or right but out of grace; and yet it was not like a permitted converse with an oriental despot. Thus a Greek word, and a Greek slogan as one might almost call it, expressed one of the distinctive facts of the new covenant-relationship shared by all believers in Christ. Every Greek knew what παρρησία meant and its fuller meaning after its baptism into Christ would be all the more precious to him. It is neither brashness nor sentimentality, nor does it display lack of reverence before the holiness of God, to claim that all Christian worship ought to express this Christian freedom of speech, whatever liturgical form that worship may take.[13]

So far we have considered estimable Greek characteristics and their building into the fabric of the Christian church; but to stay here would be to leave too much unsaid and court the charge of 'idealising' the Greeks just as Wolf and Goethe, Keats and Matthew Arnold did. When I used the word 'versatility' of the Greek character, I had in mind Odysseus the man of many wiles, and also of many sufferings, as the typical Greek. It would be fascinating to study Odysseus and Jacob together, but we must resist that temptation and hope that someone will some day succumb to it. If we had been members of some of the early Christian churches we might have had fellow-members who reminded us of each of them. 'Greek' was a very wide term, but no doubt some of the folk disliked through all the Roman world were genuine Greeks. Juvenal is contemptuous of the hungry Greekling, the *Graeculus esuriens* who for the filling of his belly would undertake anything: 'tell him to climb the sky and he will set about it.'[14] A poor homeland, a keen wit and an empty belly have a remarkable power of fostering human initiative. Paul is very uncompromising

[13] Professor W. C. van Unnik, for the T. W. Manson Memorial Lecture in 1961, chose as title, *The Christian's Freedom of Speech in the New Testament*. This appeared in the Bulletin of the John Rylands Library xliv (1961–2), 466–88. The lecturer there says that he chooses this theme in memory of Manson's παρρησία and because the theme has been neglected.

[14] Juvenal, *Satires*, iii, 78.

in his descriptions of the unregenerate practices of members of the churches he writes to as new born in Christ. All the sins were not specially Greek, and the particular and explicit condemnations in the first chapter of Romans refer to life in that capital city with its embattled vice; though, since Paul had not been to Rome at that time, report (which can magnify things) and actual knowledge of the cities of the east must have given him much of the material for his moral indictment. The case of incest in the Corinthian church which so distresses him seems to be a lapse of Jewish Christians there, for he brands it as 'such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles.' One wonders whether he knew the story of Oedipus. However, while the Greeks have no monopoly of sins, the weaknesses of their character on the moral side have to be considered in the light of Christian faith and life.

Were the Greeks so weak after all? Perhaps it would be best to deal with sexual life first of all, since in speaking of the Greeks this seems sometimes to be regarded as the whole field of moral life by people who ought to know that such a view of 'morality' is in fact too limited. In particular the Greeks are thought to have been confirmed homosexuals. One might simply reply that so homosexually inclined a people as they are sometimes made out to be would not have been so prolific; but the matter needs more discussion than this. There is indeed a whole section of the Palatine Anthology, collecting short poems normally of two or three couplets, which are love poems of homosexual love. Some are conventional, others seem more forceful. There is another section of the Anthology covering poems of the same kind, written to, or about, mistresses. It would seem that such homosexual poems are more frequent from Alexandrian times on, and in Attic comedy it is the courtesan who is the constant figure; though there is no squeamishness, at any rate in Aristophanes, about mentioning attachments of men to young handsome boys. These attachments were said to be encouraged among the Spartans because they fostered courage in older men who would not want to be shamed by cowardice in the presence of those they admired. Plato defends

Socrates against insinuations of this kind of relationship by hostile critics, and the speech of Alcibiades in the *Symposium* expressly contradicts such charges by showing how Socrates resisted temptation. It is the practical illustration of the doctrine that we should rise from coveting beautiful bodies to a coveting of beauty of soul, then of social order and finally of sheer Beauty above all earthly beauties. Plato himself in his outline of a constitution for a supposed new colony in Crete makes very strict laws against such homosexual practices and condemns them explicitly on principle. But Plato's *Laws* is not a transcript of Greek life as it was actually lived in any Greek city, and one ought to state clearly what the evidence shows: that no special abhorrence of these practices is found among the Greeks generally and that in this the Hebrews felt the Greeks to be abominable. How far this Hebrew attitude flowed from obedience to the Pentateuch one cannot here assess, but if the Greek Christian believers had first been attracted to the synagogue as godfearers, they would be in no doubt about the demands of the Law as far as this matter is concerned.[15]

I think, however, that once this has been said it is important to insist that there is abundant evidence of family life and natural affection among the Greeks. Professor Kitto has shown in a fair and balanced account how the supposed seclusion of Athenian women from public life must not make us regard Athenian citizens as a group of loose-living clubmen.[16] The Greeks nowhere in fact excluded their womenfolk from outdoor life to the extent that the Romans did, at any rate in early republican times; and no Greek thought of thanking whatever gods might be that he had not been born a woman. There are very beautiful and natural poems in the Anthology about desolated husbands and wives. Grave sculptures may be conventional, though never as conventional in Greece as they are with us: and they tell the same story

[15] See Plato, *Symposium*, 212 sqq; *Laws* viii. 838a sqq; R. B. Levinson, *In Defense of Plato* (Harvard U. P., 1953), 81 sqq.

[16] H. D. F. Kitto, *The Greeks* (Penguin edition), 220 sqq.

of devoted family ties. Even the lawsuits of the Attic orators concerning dowries for young women with no fathers to provide for them show that such things did not go by default.

The fact is perhaps that the Greeks were cool in their moral thinking and judgments, but not on that account immoral. In fact Xenophanes of Colophon in the sixth century B.C. had already begun moral criticism of the Homeric gods. In words often to be echoed in later Greek writers he complained that Homer and Hesiod have attributed to the gods all things which are a blame and a reproach among men, thieving and adultery and mutual deceit. Thieving, adultery and mutual deceit are therefore by general consensus a reason for censure of those who practise them. As we see in Aristophanes himself the support of old-fashioned honesty might be more a matter of the heart than the head. The fashionable sophists earlier and the sceptic philosophers later raised doubts about all the standards. 'Strong' characters then as now and at all times chose to disdain standards; and some Greeks were able to give articulate expression to the philosophy of the 'superman'. Nevertheless the 'ordinary' Greek may be considered to have acknowledged the existence of moral standards, and so in his own way to have owned the law written in his heart and to have been accused or excused by his own conscience according as he did or did not obey it.

Indeed, if this were not so, there could never have been any Greek tragedy. The famous discussion in Aristotle's *Poetics* in which he defines the tragic error which is the mainspring of the tragic plot presupposes agreed human moral standards. A good man pays what seems an excessive price for his mistake and his resulting fall and misery excites pity and terror in his fellow men. It can be disputed whether Aristotle's definition fits the whole of tragedy or even the whole of the extant fragments of Greek tragedy; but it cannot be doubted that serious moral questions and not mere theatrical spectacle occupied the Greek theatre. Their tragedies were not morality plays, but neither were they comedies of manners. The myths were moulded to the needs of tragic drama.

The law of the community was for the Greek of earlier times a positive thing and not a negative, a regulator of the common life and an inspiration to good living. Our Old Testament scholars are anxious to insist that the Law was positive for the Jews and not a catena of prohibitions. As far as the Law was God-given, in gracious invitation to covenant life, this is true in a way which has no parallel elsewhere. But if one looks at the two peoples, Greeks and Jews, side by side at the human level and on the plane of recorded history, the Greek has a more positive attitude to communal law than the Jew. The whole rabbinic and talmudic effort may indeed be aimed to enable the Jew to love God with heart, mind, soul and strength, but it helps him to do this by showing him how not to disobey in detail; and the fence about the law introduced yet other prohibitions to this end. Literal scrupulousness is a constant character of Hebraic living. The Greek on the other hand made a distinction between detailed enactments, concerning which he was as litigious as anyone could be, and the law regarded as setting a standard and pattern of life. Unwritten law might be appealed to at times unfairly by oligarchic interests to defend their privileges, but the concept of an unwritten law which is a positive guide to life is a distinctively Greek contribution to humanity: through Aristotle with his ὀρθὸς λόγος and the Stoics it passed to the Romans, and by them it was developed both on its legal and on its humanitarian side. But when Heraclitus of Ephesus at the beginning of the fifth century B.C. said that all human laws are nourished by one divine law he was only making explicit what most Greeks implicitly believed. How much of this attitude to law survived in Hellenistic cities at the time the church came into being it is not easy to say; but what feeling there still was would support this tradition of regarding the law as giving positive patterning rather than enforcing prohibitions. *Kosmos*—beauty, decorativeness, orderliness—was to be found in the order of nature, but not only there: in society it was the aim and effect of the established law.

For this reason it is a great over-simplification amounting to a

distortion of history to use the Greek word *eros* as summing up the whole of Greek life and to contrast that life with one based on *agape*. It is more true than this to say that the Greek experience represents man's searching after divine truth whereas the Bible shows God coming to man in grace. 'Feeling after God if haply they may find him' was something Paul did not condemn in his Athenian hearers, and some modern Christian scholars are less understanding in this matter than the apostle to the Gentiles was. In fact there is a place for a new theological discipline which might be called 'pselaphetics'—the study of man's gropings toward the truth as it is in Jesus. We can recognize that such gropings are a significant part of the earnest expectation of the creation for the manifestation of the sons of God without committing ourselves in any way to an acceptance of humanly contrived or extrapolated pictures of the Godhead. Seeking after God is the reverse of idolatry. There is a criterion: God hath appointed a judge whom he hath raised from the dead. Some of the sincere gropers will mock even at this and need further teaching, and others will ask less seriously for an adjournment; but groping will go on and ought to go on. It is not for any of us to decry it.

The actual first believers among the Greeks were probably in most cases already partly Jewish in spirit because they had been in touch to some extent with local synagogues. Similarly, the Jews, at any rate outside Palestine, had been somewhat Hellenized by their environment and so the Holy Spirit worked the change which made the new man in Christ neither Jew nor Greek in the crucible which that particular historical situation offered. Acts does not suggest that the turning to the Gentiles took the form of what we might describe as mass evangelism. Opportunities were taken, as at Lystra and before the Areopagus, and Paul was ready to meet the Epicureans and Stoics in the Athenian market-place; he would have spoken at Ephesus if he had been allowed to do so by the vested interests of Artemis. These passages in Acts provide difficulties for some reformed theologians who want no breath of 'natural theology' in the New Testament. One can only ask them

what they would have done in the circumstances at Lystra and in Athens. They are by no means as 'existential' in their thinking as they like to suppose if they cannot envisage this challenge to witness on the spot in language that was intelligible to the audience. Generally, however, Paul went no further from the synagogue than conditions obliged him to go. There is little evidence of the ancient equivalent of the soap-box in the early church, even though there is a readiness always to give an account of the faith when it is demanded. Yet for all this the Christian good news did manifestly spread and win converts beyond the limited synagogue circles; and in isolating the purely Greek element in the membership of the first churches one can claim to be making a legitimate use of historical imagination. The meaning of Paul's statement that 'the Greeks seek after wisdom' is a matter rather for consideration in the next lecture. Here let us only say that there probably was something more personal and individual in the Greek convert's seeking baptism than in similar decision by the Jewish convert. The Jews were accepting Christ as Messiah undeterred by the stumbling-block which the cross—disgrace, curse and defeat of Messiah—presented to them. They were acknowledging the power of God in a strange paradoxical new act, and to acknowledge it cut them off from Jewry. It was an intense and final decision for them, but it was made from a basis of automatic acceptance of the existence of God and of his dealings with Israel. The Greek really had further to travel, even if his quest for ultimate satisfaction had already led him to the synagogue and the Septuagint. We shall ask in our fourth chapter how far mystery religions he knew made unification with a dying and rising saviour intelligible to him; but it is not likely to have provided the first inducement and impetus. The way of life of the Christians and their personal persuasions must have provided the first encouragements. Justin Martyr, who came to Christ after seeking satisfaction elsewhere and not finding it, was a man of intellectual interests and wide opportunities; but there must have been many mute and less well educated Justins in the fellowship of the early churches.

And when Paul calmly tells his friends that they had been thieves, adulterers and drunkards, are we to take this as rhetorical flourish only, of the kind that is all too liable to attach itself to the rhetoric of mass evangelism in later days? I think not. I will not attempt to say how the bad characters were divided as between Jews, Greeks and the rest; but let us say at once that a number of them would undoubtedly be genuine Greeks. It would be these converts who knew most personally and dramatically the change wrought by the Holy Spirit in their daily lives. Here indeed one might speak truly of transmutation of *eros* into *agape*; though such transmutation belongs to all conversion and not to conversion of Greeks only. It would be a transmutation of the kind later described by John Wesley, adapting words of Henry More:

> 'The Spirit of refining fire
> Searching the inmost of the mind;
> To purge all fierce and foul desire
> And kindle life more true and kind.'

In fact if some of the early Greek converts had been translated across the centuries into the early Methodist class meetings they would have at once realized the similarity of their situation in things spiritual. The cooling of the fire, the lapse into mere respectability and the final lapse even from respectability might occur more rapidly in the versatile Greek than in the more solidly built English Methodist; but the original experience must have been much the same, and the lapses were probably relatively few.[17] It is clear that these Greek converts for the most part were rooted and grounded in love, and learnt the many-sided wisdom of God and the fullness of human nature in Christ. So the 'ordinary' Greek could become a doer of the word and not a hearer only.

Thus far almost all who record the story would welcome this incorporation of the Greeks. How early, then, did the 'corruption' of the pure gospel by Greek influences begin? Was it with the first

[17] 1 Cor. 11. 30 suggests that Paul did not regard them as irreparable. These offenders may have been used to meetings of *θίασοι* before their conversion.

aspirations to intellectual formulations of doctrine, or in the importation of alien forms of worship into Christian practice? The New Testament evidence suggests that corruptions of this kind were no inevitable consequence of the incorporation of Greek and Jew in one body in Christ Jesus. Strains and tensions are bound to arise among believers who are more consciously wed to long-established traditions of thought which do not arise with the more simple converts; and we ought not to assume that the first 'intake', if one may so describe it, was all on one intellectual level. We should therefore consider first of all those within the fellowship, however few they were, who rose above the intellectual level of their fellow-believers. In so doing we shall be approaching from a different angle the problem of the 'Hellenizing' of Christianity which has been the focus of so much fierce controversy.

CHAPTER III

The 'Intellectual' Greek and the Gospel

WE have tried to concentrate our attention up to this point on the evidence in the primary documents, Acts, the Pauline letters and the epistle to the Hebrews. These certainly belong to the time between Pentecost and the fall of Jerusalem and come from the centre of Christian experiences at that time. This is to assume that Acts, though probably composed by Luke as a book after A.D. 70, gives us a reliable outline of the events, and also to date Hebrews earlier than the fall of Jerusalem; but neither of these assumptions is very daring. The fact that for Christians these are canonical New Testament scriptures is a fact here insisted on simply in order to insist that as a record of God's revelation they have to be as fully understood and interpreted as the scriptures of the Old Testament, and that mere concentration on 'parallels' with the Old Testament is not a complete or adequate interpretation of their significance. The basic assumption is that the New Testament is the surviving record of an act of God. This act of God may well be as difficult to limit by historical dating as the main moments in the Old Testament revelation are. One ought not to want to play with fancies about the numbers seven and ten or the psalmist's age-limit in thinking of the importance of A.D. 70, In fact, if our Lord was born in 4 B.C. such calculations would be at once upset. But the historical time of impact is roughly from 4 B.C. to 70 A.D. and the scene of impact is Bethlehem, Nazareth, Jerusalem, Antioch, Philippi, Rome,[1] not simply Bethlehem, Nazareth and Jerusalem.

[1] We may take it that Luke concludes the Acts with the successful and free proclamation of the gospel in Rome because he is writing the continuation of the gospel story not the biography of Paul, and sees the preaching of Christ in the world's capital as a significant climax of the Pentecostal outpouring at Jerusalem.

The Roman taking of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 is probably the event outside the Christian church which has most affected the church's life: for the comparable sackings of Rome in the fifth century and of Constantinople in the fifteenth while they drove Christians of that time back upon God, came after generations of awareness that God had prepared a city for them that believed. This was still a new and drastic lesson in A.D.; 70 and, after all, no other city was comparable to Jerusalem.

If then we are to see the New Testament revelation in perspective we cannot afford to ignore the deeper significance, for Christians as well as for Jews, in the fall of Jerusalem. We have had a great flood of light thrown in recent years on the Jewish situation in Palestine; and this is all very important; but it is high time that the Hellenistic background was filled in more fully if we are to understand a faith forced out of the actual scenes of the crucifixion and the resurrection by the relentless course of historical events. For while God's mighty act was in Jerusalem, Christ suffered without the camp; and the early evidence of his death and rising again were seen in lives of men and women in the Hellenistic world, and in Rome itself, within a generation of his crucifixion. This is something more than the Jewish dispersion: it is the preaching of Messiah among the nations. To some Jewish eschatologists this might simply be a necessary incident of redemption history before the return on the clouds of glory; but if history can teach us anything at all, it teaches us that this was too narrow a view of God's purpose; and that this was no mere incident in Jewish eschatology come true, but that those to whom Messiah was preached were also to be drawn into a new Israel in which there was neither Jew nor Greek. The novelty of the church is something which tends to be lost both on the mind that can see it only in its continuity with Ancient Israel and also on the mind that thinks of the church as an inevitable and permanent body among men. Most theological minds tend to be of one or other of these types. But the primary documents show us a divine revolution and a newly created community. The inclusion of Greeks

with Jews on equal terms within it ought to be shocking, and the circumstances under which it pleased God so to shock us can never be understood too well. Having been shocked, however, we ought to turn to consider how a Greek who had some intellectual background would develop within the life of the church in the first generation. Isolation of the 'intellectual' must in some sense be artificial and arbitrary. Paul seems sometimes to use the antithesis between Jew and Greek in such a way as virtually to mean 'Gentile' by 'Greek'.[2] At other times, however, the intellectual quality of the Greek, or his culture, seems to be the distinguishing character and so Paul is debtor to Greek and Barbarian. But the religious Jew/Gentile and intellectual Greek/Barbarian antitheses come together in the opening chapter of the first letter to the Corinthians. Here all 'Greeks' represent the search for wisdom, all 'Jews' reliance on the old covenant alone. We must therefore look carefully at Paul's very direct thinking, remembering that it comes directly out of his evangelistic and pastoral experience. How does he regard his 'Greek intellectuals'?

The first thing we must emphasize is that there were probably not many of these. This is, of course, what Paul explicitly says: not many wise after the flesh. There were not many, but this implies that there were some. It does not follow that all the 'intellectuals' were Greek in the literal sense, though Paul's antitheses tempt us to think that they must have been. In fact they may have included Jews affected by Greek thinking as well as Greeks attracted to Hebrew monotheism by the life and teaching of these same Hellenized Jews. But we may here put aside these purely individual factors, and label such actual Jews and actual Greeks as 'Greeks' for the purpose of Paul's antithesis when he says, 'The Jews seek a sign, the Greeks seek wisdom.' The preaching of the cross was for the Jews a stumbling-block: a sign but a

[2] See, for instance, Romans 1. 16; 2. 9; Galatians 3. 28, and any detailed commentary on these passages. See also the article on *Ἕλλην* in Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich's lexicon, and, for wider study, the article by H. Windisch in G. Kittel, *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, *ii*, 501–14.

totally unwelcome and unacceptable sign; for the Greeks it made nonsense of all philosophy. Yet what was proclaimed in the sign of the cross was not only weak power but also foolish wisdom. The cross not only declared a mighty act: it declared also a new divine philosophy. There is a wisdom which *is* wisdom, though not the wisdom of this age. Christ the power of God is not the whole of the revelation for he is also Christ the wisdom of God. To both Jew and Greek who are saved he is *both* power *and* wisdom. In Christ there is for both Jew and Greek corrective judgment and satisfaction of need. The insistence of modern reformed theologians on action rather than contemplation, obedience rather than reasoning, and even on ethics rather than metaphysics, would seem to be one-sided if the full significance of Paul's preaching of the cross is accepted. Nor is this a too fine spinning of the threads of the argument, for this particular part of the letter to the Corinthians clearly employs rhetorical antithesis to convey briefly what the apostle feels to be vital truth. It is a short manifesto, and it sustains careful analysis.

But we can best consider how Christ the wisdom of God fulfils and condemns the wisdom of this age if we study the intellectuals within the church in two stages. We must first look at these Hellenized Jews and these Greeks drawn to the synagogue and note the content of their thinking. This is a much more limited enterprise than the consideration to which we shall then inevitably proceed, the bigger question of the relation between Greek thought and Christianity, that 'uneasy marriage between Jerusalem and Athens', which took place for better or for worse. For the immediate thought-climate of the New Testament writers presupposes only the first of these stages. Paul does indeed quote Menander and presumably expects some Corinthians to recognize the quotation, for he would hardly 'show off' his Greek literary knowledge for self-gratification only. But the old story that Seneca the Roman statesman and philosopher knew Paul and eased his condition of captivity when he first came to Rome is not likely to be founded on history. Much was happening in the

world of the first century both in the political and in the philosophical realm at the high level of society presented to us in the surviving secular literature; in Tacitus, for instance. But if we wish to understand our intellectual early church members, it is to the derived thought which is found in the world of the Hellenistic synagogue that we must first look. They would not be concerned with the intrigues of the imperial household or with the noble Stoic 'opposition' under Nero.

This thought of the Hellenistic synagogue reflects the encounter of the Jews of the dispersion with those elements in Greek thought in which they found natural affinities with their own. Philo's is the name that has traditional claim to be mentioned, and Alexandria is the most famous home of this thinking. We have to recognize that Philo may not have been as original a thinker himself as has sometimes been supposed; we have also to recognize that he comes at the end of a long process of philosophic development in Alexandrian Judaism rather than at the beginning of it and that he lived only a generation before Paul himself. Nevertheless his are the extant works that are the clearest indication of the way these philosophical ideas had grown and the way in which they had reacted on the understanding of the Old Testament scriptures. It is significant that Judaism did nothing to preserve Philo's writings: the Christian catechetical school at Alexandria was the real heir to them. Because of the lateness of the age at which Philo lived, it is in any case difficult to suppose that he himself had any direct influence on the world of Hellenistic synagogues by A.D. 50; but the kind of intermingling of Hebrew with Greek which he makes so explicit had been going on for the centuries of dispersion, and had flourished at Alexandria in particular from the time of the establishment of the Ptolemaic dynasty early in the third century B.C. It is the gradual diffusion or seepage of this kind of thought that counts for the understanding of the problem we are now considering.

Gnosticism has lately been studied intensely in all its bearings, and one of the results of this study important for us is the recognition

that it may well be older than the time of the gospel and that a Jewish outlook akin to Gnosticism undoubtedly existed. In fact it may turn out, if we are to connect the asceticism and the scrupulosity so obscurely described at the end of the second chapter of Colossians with the pretensions to higher knowledge which Paul is challenging in that epistle, that we shall come to consider the people who fomented the trouble at Colossae to have been Jews with notions approaching the later Gnostic teachings rather than Greeks or other local people. But this can only be surmise, and only closer parallels to the Colossian situation proved to have existed in Jewish circles elsewhere could throw more distinct light on the matter.

Some of the Gnostic cosmic systems were very fantastic, but along with their angelic hierarchies they also imply a picture of the universe. In this one respect they unite with the serious and systematic work of Philo in *de opificio mundi*: they accept the Greek conception of the universe as an intelligible ordered system, a natural world objectively present which our mind is capable at once of observing and understanding. Plato had said that the father and fashioner of this universe was hard to find and hard to show to others once he had been found; but as fashioner or craftsman bringing order into pre-existing unregulated material chaos his ways could best be understood. He went further and spoke of an actual act of ordering or making which instituted the system of things, with its constant periodicity, which we know. The Gnostic systems were not cosmologies, but their cosmological framework was derived from thinkers who had more soberly thought of the Greek cosmic doctrines alongside Genesis.

Now of course the present-day theologian finds it easy to riddle this Greek (or rather Platonic) doctrine with his bullets: this is not creation by divine *fiat*, this is not creation *ex nihilo*, this is not a creation which stands in a different relation to the creator from the human beings with whom, though they are creatures, he enters into an I-Thou relation; nor do obedience and disobedience, sin and grace colour the Platonic story. No indeed; though

some interesting passages from the *Timaeus* and other later dialogues of Plato might be offered to this theologian for him to shoot down one by one.[3] But the Jewish thinkers of the dispersion did not take the attitude of the present-day theologians. While the successors of Ezra were guarding the theocratic enclave of Jerusalem, with the goodwill first of the Persians and then of the Ptolemies, these Jews of the dispersion were happy to find common ground, or apparent common ground, with the more serious-minded philosophic schools. So serious was their effort to do this and at the same time to be faithful to the scriptures, that they built a solid bridge which is not well described either as a synthesis or as a syncretism. The roads leading on to it out of ancient Greek thought are chiefly from Platonism and Stoicism; those leading away from it at the beginning of the third century A.D. are to neo-Platonism on the one side and to the Greek Fathers on the other.

This Alexandrian religious philosophy was all very daring, mentally and spiritually. The Jews who engaged in it began the story that it was 'all in the Bible' as a kind of justification to themselves firstly and then to the others. Various stories of how the wisdom of Moses reached the Greeks were put about, and the later *dictum* of the neo-Pythagorean Numenius that Plato was 'Moses speaking Attic Greek' has a long ancestry which can be traced to the Jewish claim to all wisdom for the God revealed in the scriptures of the Old Testament. Even if the stories told of the transmission of the wisdom implied thieving on the part of the Greeks, they gave authority in Jewish eyes to what the Greeks had stolen. And, under their opportunist disguise, they pose a deeper question to us.

But to show that it was indeed 'all in the Bible' was not easy for them; and it was here that the method of allegory, for which the Alexandrian school was so famous, came to be employed. For Philo, goodness which learns life's lessons is embodied in

[3] On this see below chapter V, 116–9. *Timaeus* 41b is particularly relevant though not often cited.

Abraham while innate goodness is seen in Isaac; goodness which is fought and struggled for is seen in Jacob. Other allegories have less obvious connections with the literal sense of the passages on which they are based. The literal sense is not denied; but the secondary sense, usually of psychological content and ethical import, is there for the more percipient to perceive and take to themselves. One can notice here different kinds of provocation to allegory. Sometimes the narrative can be embarrassing when seen from a less primitive ethical standpoint. In these cases its secondary allegorical meaning is really the one these Alexandrian Jewish expositors commend. Here they are in a direct line with Greek allegorizers of Homer, and we can see how they may have inherited the habit from them. It began in the sixth century B.C. with a certain Theagenes of Rhegium; but Plato rejected it as a means of smoothing out what was offensive to later consciences in the Homeric text. Rather than accept this way out he would expel Homer from his ideal state altogether. The Stoics, however, reacted against Plato and allegorized the immoral myths and fables wholesale. In particular a writer generally called pseudo-Heraclitus expressly interpreted Homer for the moral education of children. This pointed the way to Philo and his predecessors.

At other times the primary meaning seemed to the expositors to be merely trivial. Can God really be interested in details of the purity of the victim for sacrifice? No, these stand for purifications of a moral kind required of us, says Philo. In the same unliteral spirit Paul asks, 'Does God care for oxen?', but he applies the word about not muzzling the ox when he treads the corn to teach the duty of paying the maintenance of Christian teachers. This perhaps indicates the difference of interest and of method in Paul and in Philo.

Paul did indeed allegorize, but in the rabbinic fashion rather than the Alexandrian, in Galatians. Philonic allegory does not appear as a method in the New Testament writings, and it was only with the Alexandrian catechetical school and especially in Origen that it became prominent in the church. Yet it is impor-

tant as having provided a broad highway for Greek thought about man's constitution and his ethical struggle to enter into exposition of the scriptures. The milder methods of drawing 'morals' for daily life from the stories of the Old Testament would readily spread into synagogue exegesis encouraged by this deeper and more drastic allegorical method of explanation favoured in Alexandria. No doubt ethical and hortatory exegesis of this kind would appeal to the intelligent Greek who came or was brought to the synagogue influence. For every kind of philosopher was hortatory at this time, as witness not only the letters and essays of Seneca but the discourses of Epictetus, which are very like sermons. To explain and defend the Law and the other writings of the Old Testament in this common vocabulary of ethics and within this common field of hortatory discourse would seem natural enough in a Hellenistic synagogue.[4] So one must think of a gradual and unforced assimilation to the thought-climate of the day, rather than of any conscious and deliberate syncretism or Hellenization of the biblical in the synagogues of the Hellenistic world, at any rate apart from special places like Alexandria.

Now what in fact happened in the coming of the gospel to

[4] The important study by Dr J. Sevenster, *Paul and Seneca* (Brill, Leiden, 1961) brings out all the differences of meaning between scriptural and Stoic usage even when the vocabulary is the same. His treatment of *ἀρετή* ('if there be any *virtue* ... ' etc.) at Phil. 4. 8 (pp. 152–6) is typical of his fairness and his conviction as to basic differences. My contention is that it would not *sound* so different to the Greek convert or Greek chance-hearer in the synagogue. Only if he began to enter later on into the new life in Christ would the difference in meaning become real to him. I find myself at cross purposes in a similar way with Professor John Ferguson in his book *Moral Values in the Ancient World* (London, 1958). He also works by analytical contrast of Christian and pagan values; though in a different idiom from that of Sevenster and recent biblical scholars; rather, in fact, in the manner of Glover's *Conflict of Religions* on which I have remarked in the bibliographical note at the beginning of the book. The rather rough handling of Ferguson's book in the *Classical Review* (x, N.S. (1960), 50–51) indicates the feeling of the classical scholar that even where this is good moral analysis it is not a transcript of the real conflicts in the minds of early Christians. An admirable review of this work is by Dr Ernst Badian in the Durham University Journal, for December 1959 (xxi, 1, 41–43).

people of this intellectual climate? A recent writer in *New Testament Studies* has analysed Paul's speech before the Areopagus and represented it as a planned attack of Hebrew truth on Greek error.[5] But this writer ignores Paul's sense of place and time. Paul could adapt himself adroitly to the kind of council or tribunal before which he was speaking; and he was presenting a reasoned case, rather than preaching a sermon on Mars Hill. But his aim is clearly to take his hearers with him as far as he can and to traverse all possible common ground before stating the *differentia* which constituted the challenge of the faith. The council knew and accepted what he was doing: they only proposed to leave their consideration till another day when he had left behind language which a good Stoic might have used, though admittedly not to mean precisely the same things. Now in preaching in a synagogue or addressing a Christian group, Paul is no longer on Mars Hill; but I question whether he did what some writers in *New Testament Studies* and the *Scottish Journal of Theology* tend to say he must have done. He had his own evangelical opportunism, which Professor Henry Chadwick once described as his 'lifemanship' when expounding Paul's statement to the Corinthians about being all things to all men. To those without the law he was as himself without the law, though, he adds, as under the law of Christ in the sight of God. I do not therefore see him as deliberately attacking Greek ideas or expressions when commending Christ's saving name to Greek intellectuals. I see him as able to adapt himself to their mental level and to make them understand. He was of course bringing a devastatingly new thing to them and he would not be unfaithful or compromising in doing so; but he would try so to preach Christ that they learned him aright, and he would look for quite practical signs to see that they were not grieving the Holy Spirit when he next visited them or heard from them.

More than this, however, is to be said. Faced at Colossae with a false pretension to knowledge bound up with a theory of the

[5] H. P. Owen, in *New Testament Studies*, v (1958–9), 133–43.

universe, Paul propounds a Christocentric alternative and uses their own terms to correct the Colossians. In Christ are the hidden reserves of knowledge: around him the whole creation revolves. The theme of descent and return is made to teach the truth of the incarnation to the Philippians so that they too may look at things the way Jesus the anointed one did. Likewise in the pastoral epistles we see how the appearance of Christ and his expected re-appearance are closely linked to injunctions to flee ungodly lusts and live a blameless life which reflect the Hellenistic environment and call to mind moral exhortation like that of Epictetus. There is no question of 'interim-ethic' here in the Pastorals: for a bishop to be husband of one wife would be necessary and right even if the present age were to go on quite a long time. It is true that we have no autonomous ethic here and no autonomous metaphysics; and yet thought-forms which are part Hebraic and part Hellenic are called upon indifferently to declare the whole truth of God.

Professor R. P. C. Hanson in his book, *Allegory and Event*,[6] in which he studies particularly Origen's use of allegory, discusses Philo at length and considers also allegory in the New Testament writers. He points out that apart from Paul's rabbinic exercise in Galatians, they keep rather to typology or to lessons to be learnt from parallels between the old covenant and the new. Yet while direct borrowing from Philo is not to be seen in Hebrews in the way it has sometimes been postulated, Dr Hanson demonstrates how at many points Philo and the author of the epistle have the same thought-forms. No doubt the author of the epistle gets closer to the heart of the Old Testament revelation than Philo does, and of course his whole theme is Jesus Christ, Joshua the Messiah. Yet the full compass of that theme requires all that Philo and the rest can offer him in the way of thought-forms and all the inner experience of Dispersion Jewry as well as that of the guardians and defenders of the deposit of faith in Jerusalem itself.

[6] R. P. C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event: a study of the sources and significance of Origen's interpretation of Scripture* (London, 1959).

Much the same is true of the fourth gospel. This is not the place to enter into controversy about Hellenic and Hebraic content in its prologue and in its dialogues. It may be possible as a *tour de force* to prove that everything in it could stem from pure Hebrew antecedents, but it will never be possible to prove that its hearers heard it with minds and hearts uninfluenced by Hellenistic meanings of the words they heard read to them. There would be almost equal difficulty in convincing us that this fact worried the evangelist. There was, of course, a whole field of literature intermediate between midrash and philosophising (the wisdom literature falls into this very wide territory) and the 'word' as understood by evangelist and hearers must have gathered some of its meaning from this region. But however wide this intermediate region may be, one must face the fact that it *is* intermediate between elaborated interpretation of the plain text of Hebrew scripture on the one hand and the full and conscious use of speculation upon the mysteries of God and the universe on the other. All the insistence on Hebraic elements in the fourth gospel and discountenancing of Hellenic ones cannot alter this main truth. It may be that the Greeks it talks about were really Hellenists of the dispersion. The fact remains that it speaks more often in Hellenistic terms than in Palestinian. It has the closer intimacies with the disciples, given to Jesus out of the world, as friends not as servants, and his prayer for them and not for the world; but no less it declares that God sent his Son into the world that the world through him might be saved. Who is to estimate what is Hebrew and what is Greek in the word *κόσμος* in these passages? Or in the word for truth, *ἀλήθεια*? Or in *λόγος* itself? If *λόγος* has an exclusively Hebrew meaning, the crucial words *ὁ λόγος σάρξ ἐγένετο* lose much of their challenge.

The sum of the whole matter would seem to be this: that if we are to regard as perversions the Greek influences which played on the Jews of the dispersion and the Hellenistic synagogues, we have to deny that the very language and forms of thought in which the New Testament writers wrote are a sufficient vehicle for

the word of God. We have indeed to distinguish the word from the vehicle, but we also have to do this in the case of the Hebrew of the Old Testament. It is true that in the case of the Old Testament the word almost created the vehicle, because Hebrew literature outside scripture in the early centuries is almost negligible; but the fact that the word proclaimed the new covenant through a language already formed and with a semantic history outside scripture may be something that we should first accept and then ponder as part of the divine initiative. For the Aramaic—both the speech itself and any writings there may have been—had to be turned into Greek. There can be no question about that.

With this in mind, we must now look forward from the first century at the history of the spread of the church among the nations and the inevitable encounter at the level of the leaders of the thought of the day between Christian teachers and Greek thinkers. Before doing so one ought to mention the early apologists who come in level of thought as well as in historical sequence somewhere between the intellectuals among the early church members and Origen whose system of Christian doctrine challenges comparison for its universal scope with the grandeur of the last non-Christian Greek system, that of Plotinus. The apologists were defending the faith and not propounding a solution of intellectual problems; but it may be noted that Justin and Athenagoras both represent the need for turning to Christ at the end of a philosophical quest while Aristeides, who was an Athenian no less than an Athenagoras, is inclined to make a sharp distinction between philosophy and simple trust. Tatian had the same inclination, but he was an Assyrian.

I shall not attempt to recount the story of the full-scale encounter with Greek thought, which is largely the story of the catechetical school at Alexandria which gave us Clement and Origen. The time of free speculation on the mysteries ended with Origen and the credal needs of the next centuries both checked the speculative urge and preserved the speculations of an earlier age in a more rigid form. Yet in the Greek Fathers and in Augustine, Latin

Father though he be, both contemporary and ancient philosophy enter in, to be reinterpreted in a Christian sense.

Everyone agrees that this happened: the controversy, put very simply, is whether or not it was a good thing. It is a vast and intense controversy, and to try to separate the contestants is only to invite blows from each of them. But, since vital battles are being fought, we must first try to understand what the issues are. For some protestants the whole issue of the Reformation seems to be involved in the crisis of this earlier age; the scholasticism which Luther rejected is seen as having ingratiated itself here and to have spoiled the original faith. Others see the evolution of a Christian philosophy as going along with increased institutionalism and a weakening personal devotion, except in detached groups living under monastic rule. Such thinkers, because they regard one or both of these concomitants as disastrous, conclude that the philosophising must have been disastrous too. Others hold that faith, to be faith, must be simple trust on a personal level, and that any rationalization or speculation necessarily distorts and impairs the awareness of this personal relation which alone is saving knowledge. Others again find assent to creeds, especially creeds with philosophical language in them, a wrong method of affirmation of Christian allegiance. All these objections have a great deal in common, and clearly they must raise serious questionings for anyone brought up in any of the protestant or reformed churches. It will be easier to formulate answers if we can separate the issues involved here.

We may first distinguish between the formulation of creeds and philosophising. The former uses philosophical terminology so far as may be needed for an explicit statement so constructed as to rebut false doctrines; but it does not encourage free speculation on the mysteries of the faith: in fact credal orthodoxy expects all such speculation to come back to rest in the formulation which is the rule of faith. It was speculation that was thought to be too free which deprived both Clement and Origen of a place in the calendar of saints, and indeed in Origen's case provoked direct

persecution by other Christians. Greek thought did indeed claim that there are axioms of the sciences which are self-evident; and the Greek philosophers had their dogmas; but they never claimed infallibility for these. The Stoic doctrine of the periodic resolution of all things into the primal fire was taught by some leading Stoics and denied or held to be uncertain by others. A story is told of the Roman commander Mummius who took Corinth in 146 B.C. assembling all the philosophers and telling them they must agree on their doctrines before he let them go. They must somehow have convinced him that they agreed in order to escape from their detention. Neoplatonism had rather more of a fixed system of belief, but nothing like a creed. So, though the Arian controversy can be represented as having been over a diphthong in a Greek adjective, this does not mean that Greek thinkers in general really supposed at any time that acceptance of a uniform truth could be enforced. The ideal construction of Plato in the *Republic* does indeed imply a consistent and imposed system of scientifically certain truth as the basis of a good life, both for society and the individual; but even Plato's doctrine requires individual vision of the Good by each of the philosopher kings and certainly does not impose upon them sheer obedience to an established formula. Rigid credal formulation is therefore not a characteristically Greek factor in the later life of the church.

But if the Greeks were not responsible for rigid creeds, were they not responsible for depersonalized abstractions and for human pride in reasoning taking the place of humble and grateful faith? On this question of faith and reason it is necessary to remind ourselves that, as the reformers themselves insisted, faith is the gift of God. One can understand the doctrines of Luther, Calvin, Barth or of any form of Christian existentialism, even Kierkegaard himself, and still lack the saving knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. When faith is given to the man whose mind ranges over those questions about the nature of the universe which the Greeks habitually asked, it is not necessarily a lack of humility or a renunciation of faith on his part if he goes on asking these questions

when the eyes of the mind (in the New Testament meaning of 'mind') have been enlightened. Let us ask ourselves what Augustine ought to have done once he was soundly converted. Ought he to have dropped his Platonism as decidedly as he dropped his loose living? Did he not serve Christ better by going on thinking but thinking Christocentrically? Platonic elements in his full Christian philosophy can still be clearly discerned, but would that philosophy have been as full and as Christian without them? The Gnostics needed to be taught that a capacity to think a little more daringly than other Christians made them no better nor any more deserving of God's grace than their simpler Christian brethren; and this reminder that knowledge puffeth up and love buildeth up is something all Christians have to learn and Greek intellectuals have especially to learn. But this does not mean that philosophical thinking in a man of faith obliterates his faith. *Fides quaerens intellectum* is the counterpart of *Immo, crede ut intelligas*, not the negation of it.

The real question therefore is whether the Greeks inevitably so used their minds as to reduce the Christian faith to a philosophy, and thus to something human, and not even to something fully human, because of the tendency of their thought to abstraction and depersonalization. The most moving statement of this case is probably still to be found in Hatch's Hibbert Lectures for 1888, edited and in some measure pieced together after his death by Principal A. M. Fairbairn of Mansfield College.[7] It speaks in a different idiom from that of today, but it joins up in its essential thought with much that is said today. Asking the vital question about the relation of these Greek elements in Christianity to the nature of Christianity itself, Hatch says:

> 'It is possible to urge on the one hand that Christianity, which began without them—which grew on a soil whereon

[7] The lectures were published in 1891, with the title *Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages on the Christian Church*. It has recently been issued in a 'paperback' edition with the title *The Influence of Greek Ideas on Christianity*.

metaphysics never throve—which won its first victories over the world by the simple moral force of the Sermon on the Mount and by the sublime influence of the life and death of Jesus Christ, may throw off Hellenism and be none the loser, but rather stand out again before the world in the uncoloured majesty of the Gospels.

It is possible to urge on the other hand that the tree of life which was planted by God Himself in the soil of human society was intended from the first to grow by assimilating to itself whatever elements it found there.'[8]

Hatch is concerned to defend the former of these theses—that the purity of simple unmetaphysical Christianity was sicklied over by the pale cast of Greek thought. This claim that the Bible is better without metaphysics was put into four lines by William Cowper in the Olney Hymns, for Cowper really took the same side as Hatch took a century later:

'A glory gilds the sacred page
Majestic like the sun;
It gives a light to every age
It gives, but borrows none.'

There is, of course, truth here but there is also over-simplification. The word does in a sense borrow the means of its expression though itself remaining eternal and inviolable. Neither Hatch nor Cowper really acknowledge that the sacred page has writing on it in a human language, and that its good tidings of great joy which are for all people are variously and strangely conveyed. There is a different medium, which we have tried to define a little more closely, for the conveyance of the new covenant revelation than for that of the old covenant revelation. This does not of course mean that God had to wait until Greek thought had

[8] This is the view of H. Rahner in *Greek Myths and Christian Mysteries* (Burnes Oates, 1963, in English translation). The work of S. Angus, though not up to date, presents a more balanced general estimate.

infiltrated Judaism before he could express himself fully; but it does mean that as surely as he chose one medium of revelation he chose the other: having spoken in divers fashions to the fathers by the prophets he spoke at the end of the ages, by his Son, the express image of his person through whom he made the worlds.

To hear the word and to do it is never ultimately an exercise in scholarship or in linguistics. Nevertheless divorce of saving truth and vital encounter from the 'sacred page' is a false and dangerous estrangement. We can only try the spirits whether they be of God by the touchstone of scripture, even though the Spirit must breathe upon the words to bring the truth to light. Exposition of the written word is therefore a vital and necessary part of the church's task, and this exposition itself must always rest on the 'original tongues'. Greek is one of these original tongues. The many things that had been said in it by the time the New Testament was written had played their full part in making it a medium of expression. One does not say that the word 'borrows' anything; but one can and must say that it uses what it will for its own conveyance. In spite of its clear links with the Septuagint, which itself modified the Hebrew which it sought to convey, the New Testament form of the κοινή is an amalgam of many elements, and the 'secular' language in it much exceeds the 'sacred' terminology which it preserves from translated Hebrew. The word deigned to be expressed in New Testament κοινή.

Thus it came about that the full revelation was received, expounded and pondered by Greeks and Romans in a Bible which was Greek throughout, and later Latin throughout in the west. This is partly due to the historic fact that Judaism drew back within itself after the destruction of Jerusalem and that few Jewish Christians are found after the early generations. The Ebionites, moreover, disjoined themselves or were disjoined from the main body. The present opportunities to study and understand the Hebrew language were not available for many Christians in these early centuries. However seriously Christians like Tertullian or

the Donatists might wish to maintain a primitive purity against a worldly intellectualism, they were bound to think in the forms and constructions of the western languages. Even Tatian, who was a pupil of Justin Martyr but turned away from Greek culture on reading the Old Testament, read the Old Testament in Greek and himself wrote in Greek. We must not think of these centuries as deliberately refusing to undertake a course of biblical semantics or of wilfully refusing to learn Hebrew; and neither may we regard their theological thought as suspect because they had no Hebrew, or very little. The full exposition of the word no doubt always needs knowledge of all three original tongues; but this ought not to warrant the rise of an esoteric côterie of scholars enjoying the practice of semantics as a kind of private revelation. Paul told the Corinthians to buy whatever is sold in the shambles. Theologians should therefore use the general lexicon before making any special ones.

There may even have been a temporary benefit at this particular point in the relatively slight command of the original Hebrew by Christians. If an age is to receive the word, there must be an attempt at comprehension and expression of its meaning in the terms of that age. Midrash and other elaborate interpretations are characteristic ways of the Jewish reception of the word. They are worthy of all respect, and Christians did in fact imitate them consciously or unconsciously. Yet our Lord himself warned us that they could at times make the law of no effect. Attempt to receive and interpret the word by less religiously tutored Greek and Roman minds probably aided its real dissemination at this stage, when the canon of New Testament scriptures was being settled. A more speculative meditation on the word was typical of the Greek reception of it. This too could, and at times did, obscure the word; but it was not bound to do so, and it was in fact an effort to receive what was said, to accept the light and not to lend it splendour.

It should also be remembered that Greek thinking was largely called in to elucidate the problems that arose from the church's

affirmation of the nature of God. The Greeks did not, at this point in the church's history, attempt to prove God's existence rationally. At any rate in principle, both trinitarian and Christological arguments had to do with revealed truth about a self-authenticating Godhead. It could well be argued that this was to give Greek thought a task for which it was less well fitted than for speculation on the nature of the universe. The strength of Greek thought is in its effort at discovering and defining what is constant and universal; and, apart from the sceptics who are found at all times among the Greek thinkers, their common faith is that there is an outside reality distinct from ourselves which we can know, by sense, by reason or by both at once. Differentiation of the various psychic faculties in ourselves was, of course, attempted also; but the treating of divine personality as a complex real object was a strange and unlikely exercise for a Greek mind. We shall have more to say in the next lecture about the Greeks' own sense of the divine; but we can say unreservedly that by themselves they could never have evolved the doctrine of the trinity. The apparent approach to it found in 'middle Platonism' itself goes back to Philo's (or rather to Alexandrian) understanding of Plato's *Timaeus*; and this was an attempted reconciling of the *Timaeus* with Genesis. Therefore it was the attempt to express the relation between a creating deity and a created world: it was not an attempt to differentiate the elements of the person of the creator. Even the later Neoplatonic structures tend to be hierarchical rather than of co-equals.

One can say, then, with some justification that the use of Greek philosophical terms of which most complaint is made by Hatch and by others since his day (the importation of metaphysical distinctions into credal formulae) is by no means a natural product of the Greek mind. It would appear that Greek thought was forced to be a handmaid of theology in making these formulations.

The most natural interplay of Greek with Christian thought was in the much wider field of general culture. When the Greeks

first came up seriously against the Jews they regarded their monotheism as a philosophy.[9]

They were interested in this people who used no graven images and relied on a divinely given law. Their monotheism had interest for the Greeks—especially of course for the Stoics—in its promise of the unification of all truth and all experience. Werner Jaeger has said, no doubt very rightly:

> 'I am afraid the Jewish holy book would never have been translated and the Septuagint might never have come into existence, were it not for the expectation of the Greeks in Alexandria to find in it the secret of what they respectfully called the philosophy of the barbarians.'

It is therefore natural that dialogue between Greek and Christian should appear in the work of Justin Martyr, who did not remove the philosopher's mantle after baptism but taught that Christianity was the final philosophy. Tertullian might later on say that faith is wholly other than philosophical reason; but Tertullian is an African, who does not see that for Justin dialogue *is* preaching and witnessing. Thus in our day speculative debate is out of fashion, but 'conversation' and 'encounter' are very much in fashion. Justin's argument with Trypho is 'conversation' and not mere debate; so, later on, is Origen's argument with Celsus.

We must therefore see in the 'intellectual' Greek approach,

[9] The great German refugee scholar Werner Jaeger who has probably done most in this century to revitalize the study of Aristotle and has studied the whole of Greek life, died in 1961; and a year before he delivered the course of lectures at Harvard the record of which has appeared since his death as the book *Early Christianity and Greek Paideia*. In this he gathers the fruits of several earlier writings and shows in detail how contact between differing ways, first Greek and Jewish and then Greek and Christian, did go on at the level of mutual conversations. Greek culture in general was by this time considered subsidiary to philosophy and philosophy itself was more a way of life than a scheme of the universe. It was along this way of philosophical discussion based on mutual esteem that Greek culture really influenced the church and through it secured its own survival. Jaeger shows how this happened historically, joining Gregory of Nyssa with Erasmus across the centuries.

along with much that is proud and opinionated, one way of humbly receiving the word. We may, and should, draw conclusions about the apparently unreconciled tension between Athens and Jerusalem, which is always present, and is always showing itself as a new issue. We may take a notable example of a generation ago. S. C. Roberts in his personal study of T. R. Glover prefixed to the posthumous collection of Glover's essays, *Streams of Hellas*, says that in him Luther and Erasmus existed in tension; and those who had the privilege of knowing Glover personally would agree with this as a true assessment. There is in fact a necessary tension between revealed truth and humanism, but it by no means coincides with the tension between the Greek and the Hebrew. The element of persuasion and reasoned argument for which the humanist looks, and his insistence on sharing in all attitudes to life at a human level 'on the basis that all human values have some validity' seem too often to the theologian to be simple ignorance of the distance between God and man and a refusal to bow to the command 'Hear, O Israel.' The humanist on the other hand, told to listen to God, feels sure that in fact he is being made to listen to a man of like passions with himself, and perhaps of less controlled passions, namely the theologian. He may ask sarcastically whether *odium theologicum* can really minister the saving grace of God. The theologian then retorts that one who believes in human reason and its power to understand all things is the first and greatest of the idolaters. Thus the uncomplimentary war continues: its phases are only too familiar.

It may not yet be time to call a truce but certain lessons can be learned and applied to the common advantage. The theologian needs to realize that bombardment of his fellow-men is not necessarily the only way to be obedient to the commands of God or to ensure their obedience. After all, the prophet's denunciation, a denunciation of false religion and false culture, is remarkably combined with 'Come and let us reason together.' I know quite well that this does *not* mean 'Come and let us begin a Socratic dialogue and discuss the general definition of righteousness', but

what it *does* mean is important. The unwillingness of God to give Israel up ought to be the standard for us, and this should teach the theologian never to assume superiority over his neighbour in the name of God. The mutual esteem normally present between philosophers is an important achievement, and so is the mutual toleration to which it leads. Of course Adam's fall causes philosophers to quarrel at times also; but their ideal of free and fair conversation, an ideal which they fail to achieve fully, is something which is in accord with the grace of God revealed to Israel and in Christ. It implies loving one's brother as oneself.

I suppose that there will be one main objection to all this from the theological side. All this reasoned argument, we shall be told, leaves out the cross; and that this is to leave out the central matter. Now it is a notable historical fact that at the time of trinitarian and Christological controversy, when strict logical elucidation was attempted in these matters, there was less formulation of the doctrine of redemption. In what they do say the Greek Fathers can hardly be proved to show a less orthodox approach than the Latin; though they probably tended, as the Greek church still does, to focus their faith on the Easter victory of the Lord that gives meaning and power to his sufferings. However, when we turn from studying the historical trend, and ask how any Christian interested in philosophical questions truly encounters the cross, the answer surely is that he does so like every other Christian: the cross judges and saves the whole man or does not save him at all. The resistance of the Jew to the cross is at least as great as that of the Greek, whether one takes these terms historically in terms of the early church or as descriptions of men at all times in different human situations, those born inside a tradition fed on the Bible and those outside it; or, alternatively if one looks at human temperaments, and distinguishes those naturally inclined to accept religious truth on authority and those naturally inclined to think everything out for themselves. We saw in the case of 'the ordinary Greek' that conversion might well mean a very marked re-orientation; and the story is not really different in the case of

the 'intellectual' Greek. Presentation of the story of Jesus of Nazareth and his claims might be made in a less Palestinian idiom as time went on in the Graeco-Roman world, but there was always a strong Greek case for avoiding full allegiance to him. The objections which Celsus raised and which Origen tried to meet still have their force. We do not hear them raised so explicitly later, but by that time they were muffled by the authoritarian element in the church and by the evident collapse of paganism. Yet the cross still was and still is foolishness to the Greek until he is brought to see the wisdom of God in it by a conviction which is not wrought by man or by man's reasoning. This can never be otherwise. But let us avoid false deductions from this truth. Clearly a carpenter or a farmer will not cease to pursue his craft because the wisdom embodied in it is shown by the cross to be a limited this-worldly wisdom; but neither ought the playwright or the artist or the speculative thinker. The church undoubtedly did wrong to be frightened of Origen's free thinking. This is not to say that Origen was infallible or that all his teaching can be followed; but his kind of attempt to re-think the universe as a Christian has been shackled ever since by well-meaning but evil-working forms of veto. Not many like him are to be expected to appear, but at a humbler level than his those who seek to understand human thinking and to do their own have been given talents; and these talents of theirs ought to be put to usury. It is neither necessary nor desirable that all of these thinkers should be professional theologians; but it is most desirable that there should be real fellowship in Christ, which can involve sharp talk if necessary, between these men who do their own thinking in Christ and the theologians who seek primarily to expound systematically what is affirmed in the scriptures concerning God's revelation of himself. If both are sincere believers, or, in more old-fashioned terms, if both are soundly converted, all will fall out to the greater glory of God.

CHAPTER IV

The 'Religious' Greek and the Gospel

THE Stoics had a paradox that all sins are equal and defended it by saying that a man could drown as easily in five fathoms as in fifty. It might seem less paradoxical to say that all heathenism is alike and all worship other than the worship of the living God is idolatry. But we then have to remember how Israel under the old covenant could become idolatrous in heart even when she was serving Jahweh with her lips; and even when she was not actually setting up golden calves and worshipping on high hills or under green trees she could still be faithless. Moreover, we must not forget the passage at the end of the first chapter of Malachi and the perhaps unconscious universalism of the psalmist's, 'O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.' This links itself very naturally with Paul's 'Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.' To the Athenians at that time this word of Paul could only seem a piece of impudence, spoken as it was in sight of all the splendid statues and of the Parthenon on the Acropolis;[1] but in a Jewish rabbinical scholar now turned into an apostle of Christ, the admission that Athenians did in fact worship God, even though ignorantly, was a very notable admission.

Furthermore, there is some value in considering the Greek in his previous religious experience in relation to the gospel, for it adds strength to the affirmation that the Greek was a whole man

[1] Of course there were Greeks ready to admit this ignorance: not only the militant agnostics like Protagoras who would make no statement about the gods 'because of the difficulty of the subject and the shortness of life', but Euripides with his ὅστις ποτ' εἶ σύ, δυστόπαστος εἰδέναι 'whosoever thou be, hardly to be known by all our conjecture' (*Troades* 884 sqq.), and Plato with his words about the difficulty of finding the 'frame and father of this universe' (*Timaeus* 28 c 3).

and not merely a thinker. It is more difficult to sort out what is distinctly Greek in the vast medley of cults and worships that were to be found in the places where the gospel was first preached and the early churches grew up. The obvious state cults are to be found there, like Artemis at Ephesus, famous throughout the ancient world and an excellent source of revenue for the silversmiths. The glimpse of the local cult in Lystra is more pleasing: though the people there use the speech of Lycaonia, whatever that was, their city is under the protection of Zeus;[2] and it is his priest who comes out to sacrifice to the epiphany of Zeus, Barnabas: for Paul had far too much to say to be taken for so august a deity. But though traditional city-guardian deities might accompany the eastern spread of the city-state, their religious influence was gone. Plato in the *Laws* tried to plan a city-state with completely integrated life and worship, and his effort serves to show how it is possible to preserve the religious consciousness of the city-state in a worship which is very far from negligible. But it was not an adequate faith. Socrates obeyed Apollo as the ordainer for him of an individual vocation. His accusers charged him with not worshipping the gods the city worships but inventing strange divinities: they were wrong on most points of fact but not altogether wrong at a deeper level. Socrates could rightly say that he believed in the gods in a way none of his accusers did, and this was evident in his life and death.

Two religious institutions of old Greece ought, however, to be remembered, the Delphic Oracle and the Eleusinian mysteries. Plutarch's essay on the falling into desuetude of the oracles is the work of a sincerely religious man as well as of a traditionalist. The obvious political machinations of the Delphic priests do not altogether remove the significance of the seeking of Apollo's advice by the various states in particular political crises. The truce in the sacred precincts of Delphi, which enabled missions from states actually at war with each other to join in the festival, was

[2] Acts 14. 12. It is most unfortunate that the New English Bible still talks of Jupiter and Mercury instead of Zeus and Hermes who are there in the text.

in real fact a sacred truce. The Greeks were not quite as blind to the unique in history, or to the moral judgments revealed in history, as some of our theologians like to suggest. Thucydides is a cooler and more sceptical writer than Herodotus, but both see actual history as illustrative of obedience and disobedience to the universal truth that man must remember that he is mortal; and these writers certainly do not regard crises in history as unreal; they never aim at describing men and peoples as if they were no more unpredictable in their behaviour-patterns than fire, air and water. Alexander believed that he had a unique opportunity in history assigned to him: and he was not a mere megalomaniac. There is no leaning among the Greeks to statistically-controlled general statements—they knew the unique rather more clearly than we do; and cyclic theories of recurrence in the natural world did not affect their judgments on political events or blunt their consciences on the issues of their day.

But interesting as the oracle of Delphi is (and with it one may mention in passing the mass of less reputable soothsaying we find among the Greeks), the mysteries of Eleusis are probably more important for our enquiry. They began very early and ended only after the complete official triumph of Christianity. They began as literally Eleusinian, then as Athenian, then as open to all Greek-speakers whose hands were not defiled with blood, men or women, slave or free. Romans and Latin speakers came to be treated for the purposes of the mysteries as speaking Greek. Beginning as a fertility rite, concerned with the seed and the ear and the grain, the mysteries took on bigger meanings and gave expression to a hope of life after death of which the revived grain was a type and a promise. The observances began with a sacred bath and culminated in a sacred feast and a secret drama. The initiates, in Synesius's famous words, went not to learn something but to have something done to them—*οὐ μαθεῖν τι δεῖν ἀλλὰ παθεῖν καὶ διατεθῆναι γενομένους δηλονότι ἐπιτηδείους.* (*Oratio*, 48.)

There has been some discovery and a vast amount of discussion

about these Mysteries since Hatch's Hibbert Lectures of 1888[3], but, once again, his tenth lecture shows a genius not easily paralleled for picking out the essential points which count in considering how far all this had any direct significance for those Christians who came to their faith in Christ either after undergoing such initiations as those at Eleusis or else with the details of such rites as a matter of everyday acquaintance. Any attempt to argue direct influence of these rites in particular on Paul's words about baptism in Romans and Colossians may be discounted; but the fact of influence of Mystery vocabulary on the New Testament itself cannot be shrugged off. *Φωτίζειν* as a technical term of mystery-initiation and as a word referring to baptism seems to be too well authenticated to be dismissed. *Μυστήριον* is also joined with words concerned with secrecy and its absence. All these usages represent the setting of the gospel by Paul in contrast with the mysteries. It is an open mystery—but only now, for it has been kept secret and is now revealed in Christ. Yet in calling it an open mystery he is tacitly admitting, or even deliberately claiming, that it takes its place alongside the prescriptions for man's salvation which his hearers knew. Of course its place is unique and authoritative, but it speaks to that need to which the Mysteries all bear witness.

This is perhaps the best moment to consider the question of assimilation and of so-called 'development'; for the relation of the mysteries of Eleusis to the Christian gospel ordinances is only a part of the much wider question of the relation of all the cults—Persian, Asian and Assyrian as well as Greek—to the Christian rites in their later pomp and circumstance. The religious Greek here felt himself an individual like other individuals throughout the Mediterranean countries and the near east, needing and

[3] This matter is referred to in chapter 3 and especially footnote 8 there. It should be pointed out that the latest discussion, the book by George A. Mylonas (*Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries*, London, 1962) treats the Patristic evidence for the mysteries, with extreme scepticism. See the review by E. Boyancé, *Revue des Études grecques* (1962), 460–82, for a less radical judgment on the material in question.

seeking a form of salvation and finding some assurance of it in performing symbolic acts and belonging to an initiate group which had greater or lesser measure of cohesion. The early Christians themselves did not deny similarities and parallels: for them the rites were devilish imitations and inferior substitutes, designed if it were possible to deceive the very elect. The verdict of most scholars of the reformed tradition is that the elect were in fact rather seriously deceived; that language, ritual patterns and vestments then adopted have entered into the traditional churches and distorted simple obedience to the scriptures and the following out by the church of the command to observe the gospel ordinances. Ritualism and sacerdotalism are seen as here entrenching themselves and the Reformation is seen as their necessary dislodgement.

Again we have to make the *caveat* that ritualism was also a danger under the old covenant, and that sacerdotalism does not require for its manifestation elaborate vestments with a scandalous pagan history: Milton's line, 'New presbyter is but old priest writ large', is one that the reformed traditions ought never to forget. But this cannot alter the truth that on its liturgical side the church tended to fill a gap by imitating if not by actually borrowing liturgical patterns. The gap is made by the superseding of the Jewish rites and the Levitical priesthood. Christians approached the holiest by the blood of Jesus by a new and living way. Their consciences were sprinkled rather than their bodies; and yet those bodies were to be washed with pure water; and the followers of Jesus were not to forsake the assembling of themselves together. Their worship was in many ways conditioned by the synagogue worship in which so many of them had been brought up, but the synagogues did not celebrate the Passover every Sabbath; and even if proselyte baptism can be proved to have existed so far back, it was a thing additional to the essential rite of circumcision which was integral to Judaism. So some improvization in these matters was hardly avoidable for the first Christians. Of the form it took we can only judge partially with the help of the documents,

and these are only secondarily concerned with such things. It has often been remarked, but it is worth reminding ourselves of it once again, that we owe the earliest record of the words of institution of the Lord's Supper, humanly speaking, to the bad behaviour of certain Christians at Corinth.

Perhaps it is in the particular case of baptism that the issue is seen at its clearest and our various present attitudes are seen in relation to it. It would not, I think, be unfair to say that in the churches that profess and call themselves Baptists, there is at least a shyness about the Pauline doctrine of identification in baptism with Christ in death and in resurrection. It is a shyness that is now gradually beginning to be dispelled, and it never afflicted the 'Churches of Christ' (often called the 'Disciples' in America) to the same extent. This shyness comes very largely from a dislike of differing from others, especially from others of the reformed traditions, by enlarging on the significance of the sacramental act and occasion; and also maybe from a fear that such enlargement of significance diminishes the force of the doctrine of justification by faith alone. Thus it comes about that the emphasis at baptismal services so often is laid on commitment and discipleship, on confession of sin and repentance, on identification with the kingdom and the cause of Christ; but not so clearly or so wholeheartedly on the truth that we were dead and that now our lives are hid with Christ in God, and that this is our only basis for hoping to walk in newness of life. We tend to overstress individual decision and response, not really because we over-value emotional factors or are unaware that God's grace is prevenient, but because we are afraid of seeing baptism as a constant proclamation of the grave which is an empty tomb,[4] and as an effective act of incorporation into Christ whenever it is faithfully received. 'Does not

[4] The omission of the baptismal hymn beginning 'Around Thy grave, Lord Jesus, Thine open grave we stand' from the new Baptist hymnal is a further very unfortunate indication of present tendencies in Baptist devotion. The hymns appointed for baptism show a further trend away from proclamation of Easter at every baptism. One good new hymn (written by a member of the Church of Christ) does not compensate for this.

this imply baptismal regeneration?' we ask, either openly or under our breath.

Our brethren in other reformed churches have now come to stress the significance of the divine act preceding and validating all baptism, the baptism Jesus must be baptized with, which took further his baptism in Jordan. This new emphasis is a gain for us all. But then they try to apply an enlarged and renewed understanding of what baptism means according to the New Testament epistles and the Acts and try to fit it (or ignore the difficulty of fitting it) to the practice of infant baptism; and so they involve themselves in what Dr R. S. Paul, a Congregational scholar, has described as something 'vaguely dishonest'.[5] On this issue it is irrelevant to speak further here, except to say that the abundant evidence of the development of a catechumenate and of baptismal liturgy in the early centuries makes it very clear that infant baptism was nothing like so prevalent in the early centuries as many of these scholars try to make out. If one of them then replies, 'We do not want a repetition of this elaborately developed baptismal liturgy any more than we want the liturgy culminating in the Mass', one can only answer that it does not follow that the most Christian way of escaping such a development is to maintain the practice of infant baptism.

Neither Baptists nor other Christians, at any rate in the west, have really faced so far the question what the universal church practice would be like if baptism again followed catechumenate, as in the early years of the church, and ceased to take place at infancy as it now does in the vast majority of cases. Very stubborn prejudices and dislikes combine with all the other causes to prevent our envisaging such a church. We know something of these prejudices as we encounter them in inter-church conversations. Not the least is the fear of loss of denominational identity; this certainly is found in many Baptists, though they are by no means

[5] Robert S. Paul, *The Atonement and the Sacraments* (London, 1961), 348–51 are immediately relevant, but the whole book is to be commended for its binding of doctrines together and for its many insights.

alone in such fear. All this, in the contemporary Anglo-American situation at any rate, militates against our entering sympathetically into the mind and heart of an early Greek Christian as he was prepared for baptism. For a Greek catechumen there would not have been the natural and inevitable connection with instruction in scripture (which scripture was the Old Testament, of course) which had been a lifelong connection for the Jewish convert. Even if the Greek had been a hearer and a 'god-fearer' in synagogue parlance, this new commitment to Christ was different—not least in placing him in a fellowship on precisely equal terms with the most orthodox and traditional Jew among his fellow-believers in the catechumens' class. The scriptural instruction no doubt covered the Old Testament types that could be related to baptism, but would also contain Christian affirmation and ethical instruction related to it: we have lately been encouraged to see this material reflected in the epistles as we have them. Mutual concern cemented by common suffering for Christ's sake showed the baptized converts that they had passed from death to life because they loved the brethren.

It is quite possible that the ordinary Greek catechumen in the early days did not by any means fathom all the meaning that Paul sought to convey in his teaching that we are buried with Christ in baptism and raised to newness of life. It is quite possible that the Jewish convert did not understand fully that this was the new age, that at Christ's appearing we would know him as he is because the powers of the coming age are already at work in us. But Greek and Jew alike received baptism in faith and were built up in love in the communion of the faithful. We speak, no doubt, of two perfect catechumens entering a church more perfect than the first communities actually were; and yet what happened when these two men were baptized together had a real reference back to Calvary and a real reference forward to the coming of the Lord and, what is most important of all, it bore fruit in life as they grew up together into Christ.

As time went on there were more Greeks and fewer Jews in th

catechumen class and at last perhaps no Jews at all. This did not entail in orthodox Christian circles the discontinuance of Old Testament teaching; in fact the Marcionites caused a strong reaction toward reasserting the place of the Old Testament, so much so that, since Marcion's day, no one has been able to insist on the superseding of the old covenant by the new without incurring at least a suspicion of Marcionite heresy! But the fact remains that even where the Greek converts came from already Christian backgrounds and already knew the Old Testament scriptures from their youth, their entry into church fellowship through baptism was something that was new and distinctive. The fish symbol, 'Jesus Christ, God's son, Saviour' was very early related to the rite: we fishes are born in the water.

Was this development or corruption? Surely there was some measure of necessary development: here too the word had to create its vehicle and baptism received and understood in relation to dying and rising again was a true and appointed vehicle of the mighty act of God. It had its Old Testament antecedents beginning with the creation and culminating in John's baptism which Jesus of Nazareth himself accepted; but its new covenant meaning can never be divorced from the new and greater Passover. But is this all? For baptism does more than this. It condemns all other mystery cults as self-centred in the last analysis and as building a hope on forces at work in the creation rather than on the free grace of God, creator and redeemer. Yet in condemning these mystery religions it brings in the fullness of what they hope for: once again we discover that the earnest expectation of the creation awaits the manifestation of the sons of God. The influence of the Mysteries in the Christian church only became a source of corruption when the act of baptism virtually became a thing in itself, when it ceased to be done in conscious and glad obedience to a divine invitation and when the open mystery became a secret once more. There were factors in late Greco-Roman antiquity which led to all this; but there is no reason to suppose that the actual debasement of the new covenant ordinance at that time implies necessarily

that the new covenant cannot be preached by a pure observance of baptism which is a true Christian mystery, and which duly declares Christ's rising and our incorporation into him. There is one baptism as surely as there is one Lord and one faith, but we are many centuries away from it. The early Greek Christian converts came as near to knowing this true baptism as anyone has so far. This was for them the true God-given Mystery. Yet even today amid our 'unhappy divisions' a fully scriptural observance which asserts all that these first believers asserted may still hope to be blessed by the evident signs of the grace of God that they then knew.

A common theme of the mysteries was the promise of life after death to the participant: it was this common theme which led Christians also into thinking of the bread and the wine as the medicine of immortality. Here questions have been asked very pointedly in our time. Is the whole doctrine of immortality alien both to Judaism and to Christianity? Is there not here a sharp break between Greek and Christian doctrines, resurrection being Christian and immortality Greek? This question does not concern mystery cults so much as the long traditions of the Greek philosophical schools, yet the promise of life after death which the mysteries professed to give ought to be in mind quite as much as the philosophical doctrines; these latter were the possession of the few. As Oscar Cullmann stated the matter at Harvard in 1955 in a lecture, 'The teaching of the great philosophers, Socrates and Plato, can in no way be brought into consonance with that of the New Testament.' This is a more careful and precise statement of the case than usual, for Cullmann does not here assume as many writers do that the doctrine of Socrates and Plato is the universal, or at any rate the characteristic *Greek* doctrine. One ought to remember that there were in fact many Greeks for whom the land of the living was the only land that counted. Man is lighted up with glory in his great moments of achievement, Pindar said, but he is 'the dream of a shadow'. Of man he would say what Isaac Watts says of the years:

'They fly, forgotten as a dream
Dies at the opening day.'

They fly forgotten, unless the poet gives them immortality in his verse among future generations of the living. In the same tradition, Horace says that there were brave warriors before Agamemnon but they are blacked out in oblivion because they never had a poet to write verse about them that would give them after-life. That the generations of men perish like the leaves is first said in extant Greek literature in Homer. Mimnermus echoes it in the sixth century B.C. Cory caught the feeling more intimately in his famous translation of Callimachus's epigram written in the third century B.C. on his friend, the poet Heraclitus:

'And now that thou art lying, my dear old Carian guest,
A handful of grey ashes, long, long ago at rest;
Still are thy pleasant voices, thy nightingales, awake:
For Death, he taketh all away; but them he cannot take.'

At a less exalted and sophisticated level than Callimachus's epigram, grave-sculptures and inscriptions and short poems in the Anthology bear witness to the quenching of the light of life in parents or in young children, or the toll paid on the jagged island rocks by the merchant driven by the weather or over-adventurous. Neither resurrection nor immortality is in question here; and Socrates and Plato have to be understood as speaking out of this background, just as the mystery cults must also be seen as encouraging a dim hope of something beyond in these same people; or rather in others among them whose despair was less calm than the passive acceptance shown in these poems and sculptures.

Immortality in the sense Socrates and Plato spoke of it was not the common doctrine of the Greek thinkers either. Their great effort to understand all phenomena organic and inorganic in terms of the modifications of one ultimately real substance led

to a doctrine of the life-principle as one form of that substance. They did indeed come to regard man as a little world regulated by the same basic principle as the universe; but this still kept him within the universe and allowed for no real survival of personality. The Stoics tried to revert to this earlier way of looking at the universe and man: man's soul was a particle of the divine fiery spirit which was rational, planning and controlling all things. However, because the Socratic and Platonic doctrine of the soul had been enunciated since the times of the early thinkers, the Stoics found themselves almost forced into an inconsistent assertion of personal survival. Some believed that the souls of the wise persisted till the general fiery consummation, others that all souls persisted. Some even rejected the belief in the fiery consummation altogether and turned rather to the Pythagorean and Platonic myths. Meanwhile the Epicureans really maintained the pre-Socratic conception, but removed life, so far as was possible, from any different status to the lifeless. They proclaimed a gospel of peace in acceptance of mortality: death is nothing to us. There were Epicurean societies organized on the basis of veneration of Epicurus and of mutual friendliness throughout the Greco-Roman world: a leading member one of them at Oenoanda, not many miles from Colossae, set up an inscription on the walls of the town square. This has survived, and contains a kind of Epicurean credal statement. It is probably to be dated as late as the end of the second century A.D. So it is quite clear that by no means all Greek philosophers believed in personal immortality. In fact, few did so.

We must ask, then, what was distinctive about the doctrine of Socrates and Plato. It was not, as is generally supposed, the sharp dualism of soul and body. Professor E. R. Dodds has shown in his Sather Lectures, issued as a book with the title *The Greeks and the Irrational*, that the doctrine of the soul as an imprisoned divinity in the tomb of the body really comes into Greece from the shamans of the northern steppes. Plato always commands the myths he employs and is never commanded by them. For this

very reason it is not possible to build up out of the Platonic dialogues a doctrine of complete internal consistency. For we find in the dialogues mythical doctrines of varying import. Those myths that go back to the 'imprisonment' story, look to release from the body as a deliverance. Those that follow a 'transmigration' story necessarily imply reincarnation—though always after an interval. In thinking of Socrates's immediate decease in the *Phaedo* it is release that counts; but in the more general consideration of man in society, both in the *Republic* and the *Laws*, the emphasis is upon reincarnation. Each new entry into the probation-experience of bodily life is conditioned by the moral insights lost or gained in the previous probation. This is a moralizing of the transmigration doctrine in terms of reward and punishment. In the *Gorgias* alone is there a myth of a judgment which seems to have lasting consequences: this comes closest to 'heaven and hell', and here the soul after death stands naked before her true judges.

The basic affirmations of Socrates and Plato are, however, independent of the mythical framework in which they are stated. In so far as they concern aspects of the soul's history, scientific accuracy is not claimed for them by Plato himself. This is made very clear in the speech Plato attributes to Socrates at and after his trial; indeed it is made so clear that some scholars have said that Plato was a believer but Socrates was an 'agnostic'. Death, he is reported as saying, may be sheer absence of consciousness, broken by no bad dreams. But if the 'things which are said' are true, it may be migration to another realm. There Socrates will enjoy himself comparing notes with others unjustly condemned on earth and he will grill the inhabitants of the next world with questions for ever and ever. They are all immortal there, so they cannot put you to death in order to get rid of you. This all sounds quite flippant, and yet with the sitting loose to the stories and the admission that one cannot demonstrate survival, there goes the faith of the man who says that nothing evil will come to the good man in this world or any world to come, and that the gods have

regard for his concerns. Whether he in going forward to death or they in going forward to life go to the better thing is known only to God. Here the Greek agnostic believer practically requires us to speak of God and not of 'the god' or 'the gods' in order to translate his words.

Plato himself is more willing to use the words 'immortal' and 'immortality', but his attempts to base the assertion of man's immortality on sure grounds are remarkable in their variety of approach. The one that comes nearest to a formal proof is in the *Phaedrus*. There are two basic kinds of movement, intelligently willed movements, and mechanically transmitted movement. The universe is a system of regular and ordered movements implying moving forces which are regular and unfailing. We know in ourselves soul as the self-moving, body as what is moved. Our life comes to an end, but that of the universe does not; and its body must therefore always be moved by its soul. Soul is ever-moving and self-moving. This, however, is a long way from any demonstration of personal immortality. The *Timaeus* shows the universe itself, soul and body, as dependent on the act of making, at the beginning of time, by a maker and father who was himself good and wished all things to be as good as possible. He created the soul and body of the universe himself; but he left the creation of men's souls to lesser gods, except for the highest and most rational part of the soul, which he himself created for the lesser gods to use in man-making. The lesser gods themselves were dependent on the maker and father: what was bound together can be loosed, but his will, which preserved them, was a stronger and more valid guarantee of their continuance than the very bonds used in their creation. It would be a good thing if Christian thinkers gave more attention to the *Timaeus* and less to the *Phaedo* when trying to understand Plato. At any rate one can see why the Alexandrian Jews did so.

But what, then, is the distinctive Socratic and Platonic doctrine of the soul? I think it really is less a doctrine of immortality than an insistence on the eternal validity and personal relevance of good

and evil. Man's mental and moral endowment is such that he may and must choose light or darkness, knowledge or ignorance, moral good or moral evil, and this fact about him has to do with something which is independent of the earth, air, fire and water in him that make up his body. This does not mean that the body is irrelevant: the conflict within himself is sometimes (but rarely) said to be between soul and body; at other times, more exactly, it is said to be a conflict between conflicting elements in the soul. Yet this conflict is intense and vital under incarnate conditions; and it is in consciously refusing to allow himself to be so conditioned as to fall below his real nature and quality that he finds himself a man. His achievement or failure in this life is not the whole story; for he is accountable, just as the magistrates were subject to audit after their year of office. There is a spring of vitality in the moral principle in man which is not to be measured in terms of the measure of his physical vitality.

Seen in these terms, there is something which is not abolished in the revelation in Christ in this Socratic and Platonic doctrine of the human soul. Rather it looks forward in hope, as a doctrine, for judgment and for redemption. Among the later Greek thinkers, there was plenty of intellectual criticism of it: the arguments for immortality in Plato's *Phaedo* are criticized by the Peripatetic Strato of Lampsacus as drastically as they would be by any modern sceptic. But the judgment which we see from a Christian standpoint to be passed on this doctrine cannot be stated in terms of differences of psychology or of anthropology as between the Greeks and the Hebrews. No doubt it is interesting that for the Hebrew a man is a body animated, while for Plato's Academy a man is 'a soul using a body'. It is an important fact that the high esteem of the body as created by God distinguishes their approaches, but this is a matter of theology not of anthropology, and in all these discussions it is neither fair nor historically minded to criticize Socrates and Plato for never coming within the range of revealed truth. The question is whether any doctrine at all outside revealed truth shows a feeling after God more than other doctrines

do; in fact the question to be settled is the value of measuring the number of fathoms in which a man is drowning. There may be real value in doing this, for it helps us to see precisely what is revelation and what is human approach and speculation. Semitic psychology and anthropology are not necessarily more evident or more true than Greek psychology and anthropology. Once again we do not honour revealed truth by failing to see what belongs only to the language in which it was first spoken.

'Man in his essence, a totality with a particular stamp'—so the Jew understood *nephesh* according to Pedersen.[6] This is not a long way from what Socrates meant by ψυχή when he went around Athens trying to persuade his contemporaries to tend it and make it as morally good as it could be. The difference is seen not in the anthropology but in the different estimate of man's power to better himself. But this is not a matter of anthropology and is quite independent of the doctrine of man's constitution that any particular people may hold at any time. Paul's insistence that doctrines of sin and grace presuppose the existence of a conscience that either excuses or accuses both in Jew and Gentile is an insistence on the validity of the moral centre in man, even when that moral centre is seen as judged and overruled in the presence of God's holiness and grace. Paul's conflicts between flesh and spirit and his prayer to be delivered from the body of this death are indeed not to be interpreted as if Paul were a Greek or as if he were a Manichean. But it is precisely the reality and intensity of this inner struggle that strains for him any monistic view of the unity of the person; and it was just the recognition of inner moral struggle which made Plato incline rather to myth in speaking of the soul than to a more careful biological parallelism, like the thought of Aristotle. For Aristotle himself the unity of soul and body, as form and matter respectively, is the basis of psychology, but it is *not* the basis of ethics.

We may say, then, that the Socratic and Platonic conception

[6] J. Pedersen, *Israel, its Life and Culture*, i–ii, 99; as quoted by J. Sevenster, *Paul and Seneca* (Brill, Leiden, 1961), 77 n. 1.

of the soul depended on the sense of moral life and moral accountability in man which was felt to involve something other than the conditions of his physical existence, and not to be ultimately determined by these conditions, even though it is perpetually challenged by them. The down-drag of the body, even in the *Phaedo*, is really to be interpreted as the self-assertion of immediate satisfactions, of ἡδονή, against the control of the soul accentuated by bodily conditions; and it is explicitly said in the *Philebus*, a late dialogue which examines the psychology of pleasure, that all desire is within the soul: body as such has no desires.

Even so, we shall be told that when we turn to the scriptural revelation all this Socratic and Platonic doctrine is seen to fall so far short that even such 'consonances' as exist, to use Cullmann's term, are quite insignificant. But this view hardly does justice to two insights, first that of Socrates who trusted in a divine vindication of a just life unjustly condemned, and secondly that of Plato in the *Timaeus*, who saw that if there was a morally good creator and fashioner of the universe, all souls apart from him existed only by his act and will, even if he chose to will their immortality. There was thus no natural immortality except in the creator. This looks very like a groping after truth.

But the real difference between Greek doctrines of immortality and Jewish and Christian doctrines may be said to lie in the corporate nature of the resurrection doctrine and the individual character of the Greek doctrine. We know that the Pharisees and their predecessors awoke to a faith in the resurrection of the dead under the stress of the Maccabean warfare, and that the lonely individual vindication for which Job looked was the counterpart of the common hope of Israel's warriors, and of their womenfolk. Some it would seem refused deliverance in the hope of a better resurrection. Whether a completer sacrifice was thought to entitle them to this better resurrection we can only guess, but individual hopes undoubtedly entered into the corporate hope even of Maccabean Israel. Rabbinic and later interest in such

questions as the amount of a man's body that must persist in order for him to be resurrectible shows that interest in individual 'prospects' is not un-Jewish.

It is true, of course, that the Israelite only sees his resurrection as something in the thread of God's revealed purpose, his will to establish his holy rule on the earth in grace. The hope of the individual or of the generation of men is to be seen in his purpose and not in their inherent powers. This is not Greek at all; this must be granted at once. If it is then claimed that this belongs to the central element in the biblical revelation, this must not only be granted but asserted. What is not so certain, however, is that the form in which the resurrection hope was clothed in Maccabean times is its proper and permanent clothing. In its first form as it arose among the Jews it might well seem alien and contradictory to the hopes of the Greeks and of other peoples; indeed at the very occasion of its arising, the Greek (or the man calling himself Greek and trying to impose Greek ways) was in fact the hated enemy and the abomination of desolation. Yet, as transformed in Christ, the resurrection hope is not so alien to the Greeks, and the long traditional concentration of the devotion of the Greek church on Easter is not without its significance in this connection.

We should remember that Easter when it came did not fulfil the actual hopes and expectations even of the disciples. The return of Jesus alive to the company of the few faithful witnesses did not turn out to be the prelude to the restoration of the kingdom to Israel for which they looked. The Acts and the epistles show the transmutation of their hope but not its fading. There is speculation on this theme at Corinth and Paul steers his way between those who think that all there will be of resurrection was the resurrection of Christ, and those who have a picture based on Ezekiel, Daniel and Maccabean traditions in which flesh and blood and sinews cover the dry bones of the house of Israel as it stands on its feet before God an exceeding great army. Those who thought the resurrection past already were not necessarily Greek philosophers, but it might well be among the Apollos party in the church that

some would say that if we were risen with Christ in baptism, the powers of the kingdom to come were already so at work in our mortal bodies as to make resurrection a thing of the past. But Paul will not trust God for less than the mighty working which was seen in the raising of Jesus and the new glory of his body: our bodies are indeed not 'vile', but they are not the permanent temples of the Holy Spirit either; they belong to our lower level of life. Paul is always a realist. There are brethren asleep. Stephen fell asleep in sight of his Lord in heaven; and Saul, who consented to his death, no doubt took special care as a Pharisee to take note that they actually buried him. Paul knew quite well that Stephen's body still lay there in Jerusalem. Where was Stephen himself? Some say Paul could not have asked this question, for this is a separation of Stephen from his body which would be impossible for a Jew. This is an evasion of the question, not an answer to it. Perhaps in fact he would have said Stephen *was* absent from the body and present with the Lord; and yet this would not mean that his body no longer mattered to his existence: it too awaited the day of the Lord. Then all, living or sleeping, will be changed into glory like the glory of the Lord when he comes, and that, Paul says, will be incorruptibility and immortality, the fulfilment at once of the Hebrew hope and the Greek; for, after all, Paul does assert that this mortal must clothe itself with immortality, a wonderful mingling of Hebrew and Greek thinking about man's destined condition.

We cannot know what thoughts Paul would have had about the intermediate state if he had lived out the term of his natural life. In fact martyrdom soon brought him like Stephen to encounter this state, which he seems rather to have shuddered at as a state of nakedness coming between occupation of this tabernacle body and the glorious temple body. Yet even in so conceiving it, he is confident that he will still exist as Paul, even in that state of nakedness: neither life nor death nor things present nor things to come separate the believer from Christ or make him anything but an active sharer in Christ's victory. The explicit statement about

the cloud of martyrs belongs to the writer to the Hebrews, but Paul's faith in Romans leads to such implications.

We are indebted to New Testament scholars of our day (and not least to C. K. Barrett) for showing us how in the fourth gospel the hope of the coming and of the kingdom remains, and yet the long absence, the much extended interim, is now seen to have been made bearable for us in that we have the Holy Spirit and are not left orphan and comfortless. How far this deeper awareness of the Spirit's presence and help bears on the thought of the future life is a very wide question; but at any rate we can look at a single significant fact, that the Lazarus story provides us with the words we still use at Christian burials. When did Jesus use them? When Martha had said, in an orthodox but not very comforted way, 'Yes, I know he will rise in the resurrection at the last day.' Does he not say in effect that if Martha really believes on him she will learn that the dead are alive? The sign of the raising to life confirms her faith there and then; but believers in after ages whose loved ones are *not* brought back to earthly life as Lazarus was, can share the new confidence in the on-going fullness of life in Christ which is here given to Martha. It is something going beyond and beneath the hope confined to 'the general resurrection in the last day.' Now I do not in the least wish to say that this is more Greek than Hebrew; but I do see in this the fullness of Christ in which Greek and Hebrew are brought into one. In fact it re-asserts triumphantly our life in God: I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. It looks back to our Lord's dealing with the Sadducees and his exegesis of the bush. God is not the God of the dead but of the living. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and those who come from the north and the south the east and the west live in him and unto him. This is a life God-centred and not self-centred, and so for ever distinct from the immortality offered by the Eleusinian mysteries and all the other cults that sprung up in that Greco-Roman world; and yet the dimmest and most selfish hope of immortality looks up toward something more than self in which self is lost and found.

Such was the 'religious' Greek. Whether he believed that the city needed divine protection and that the god spoke in oracles giving men explicit commands; or whether he was a mystic looking for a deliverance from the sorrowful weary wheel of becoming by the way of 'likeness to God according to what is possible', he is seen to be looking forward to what God in fact has said. God has prepared a city for such as these were.

CHAPTER V

Epilogue

THE GREEK IN THE CHURCH

WE have tried to look at those people who are called Greeks in the New Testament writings without attempting to distinguish too exactly the varied senses in which the word 'Greek' is in fact found therein. In the main there is enough coherence in usage in all the passages concerned to warrant a unified definition. We are thinking of dwellers in cities, large or small, in Greece and Asia Minor in the first century. A few Greek-speaking Jews of the Dispersion might come within this category of 'Greeks', but 'Hellenists' is the proper name for these. The Greeks were therefore, essentially, the bulk of the first Gentile Christians; for the missionary journeys were made from city to city, and the mission preaching began from the local synagogue but resulted in the local church. Ethiopian, Egyptian, Italian and Spanish Christians came early to be found alongside the Greeks. Perhaps the tradition of Thomas as an apostle to the Indians has a basis in early eastward mission. The fact remains that Paul's turning to the Gentiles was very largely a turning to the Greeks. Probably he was never in fact permitted to make his journey into Spain.

At times it may well be said that Paul uses the term 'Greek' to include people with very little in them that a citizen of fifth-century Athens would have regarded as Hellenic. But in so far as these people had a common culture at all, the description 'Greek' is legitimate. It was only in Greek that Paul could write letters to them; and letters written in Greek could be circulated from one church to another though the vernacular language might be different in each case. As the churches grew and became less

Jewish and also of higher social standing, the word 'Greek' becomes increasingly a valid description of them. There is no real break between the latest Greek of the New Testament and the earliest Greek of the Fathers and the Apologists.[1] Yet all of these latter seem to imply a rather more literate audience than the New Testament epistles do. This is no reflection on Paul's literacy in Greek. There is no need to suppose that his pride in citizenship of Tarsus (for it was Tarsus, not Rome, which was 'no mean city') was something which he invented at an awkward moment to satisfy Claudius Lysias.[2] Rendel Harris may have been going too far in catching echoes of the *Clouds* of Aristophanes in Colossians, but his argument for finding an echo of the Cretan hymn to Zeus in the words, 'In him we live and move and have our being', has much more solid foundation.[3] Tarsus had a good 'provincial university' at the time, and a young Jew could be interested in its cultural influence and in athletic events in which he could never himself take part. But the apostle to the Gentiles with the care of the churches laid upon him must speak to those churches in words all their members could hear; and so he re-

[1] Detailed study of the letter of Clement of Rome to the Corinthians probably to be dated in the last decade of the first century, is to be found in Jaeger, *Early Christianity and Greek Paideia*, 12–26. There is considerable difference in content from Paul's letters but not in vocabulary.

[2] The reference to Tarsus in Acts 21. 39 seems certain: whether Paul's youth was mainly spent in Tarsus or Jerusalem (see Acts 22. 3) is a matter of debate. See the work of W. C. van Unnik translated by George Ogg and published by the Epworth Press in 1962: *Tarsus or Jerusalem, the city of Paul's youth?*

[3] Professor F. F. Bruce summarizes the evidence at p. 338 of his commentary on Acts. More detailed treatment is in A. B. Cook, *Zeus*, i, 663–665. Rendel Harris and Cook retranslated into Greek from Syriac lines quoted by the Nestorian, Isho'dad of Merv. Whether attributed to 'Epimenides' or 'Minos', they blame the Cretans for saying that Zeus has a tomb-monument, for Zeus is living and the source of our life. The quotation in Titus 1. 12 as well as in Acts 17 (and Cook would even connect the 'Unknown God' reference with these) suggests special familiarity on Paul's part. E. Jacquier in his commentary on Acts refers also to Plato *Cratylus* 396: the full reference is 396 a1–b3. Here the variant stems of Zeus's name in Greek, Δι- and Ζην-, are explained by saying that *through* (δι) him life (ζῆν) pertains to all. This is interesting, but one hardly thinks Paul could have known of it.

minded some of these Corinthians who might look for 'culture' and 'depth' in his letters that though one knew 'all the mysteries and the knowledge as well' this was futile apart from love.

This brings us again to the doctrine of Adolf von Harnack and his followers that Hellenization of the church corrupted the faith. It would not be profitable to enter into direct controversy with von Harnack a century later; but the deeper questions to which the controversy points are of permanent importance and need re-examination in the setting of present-day controversies. We have more to contend with in von Harnack than a Germanic revolt against things Hellenic (in a Germany, incidentally, where Hellenic culture had achieved a new secular significance); and even the reformers' protest against scholasticism does not exhaust the meaning of the controversy about the 'Hellenization' of the Christian faith.

There are really two questions here. One concerns the historical place of Greek Christians within the church and their continuing life within Christendom. The other concerns the place of what we may follow Paul in labelling 'Greek', when we think of the Greeks as seekers after wisdom and the Jews as seekers after signs. They are Greeks in this sense who are not Greeks outwardly, and of course the same is true of the 'Jews'. Wherever the gospel is proclaimed, Greeks and Jews in this sense are likely to be found. The Pauline warnings and affirmations retain their validity, but they need re-interpretation for each new culture and for each new generation. There may well be Pauline 'Greeks' in this sense among the Eskimos and the Polynesians: perhaps they now hold doctorates of Canadian and of New Zealand universities, but this is only until such time as they have their own academic institutions. All of them have to work out the consequences of the discovery that the cross is not foolishness after all; and they must work it all out in terms that strain but do not stultify their minds.

At the meeting of the World Council of Churches in New Delhi the appointed preacher, a Burmese Baptist,[4] claimed that

[4] The Rev. U. Ba Hmyin. See *The New Delhi Report* (London, 1961), 2–3.

it was possible and right for Christians in the far eastern countries to take the Hebrew truths of scripture and translate them into a Christian theology within the thought-forms of their own culture and traditions, by-passing thereby the Greek thought-forms which had achieved so wide a currency in western Christendom. At this same meeting of the World Council the Orthodox churches of the Greek tradition were received into full membership of the Council.

The paradox of this situation is perhaps only apparent. It is certainly not desirable that these Burmese Christians should be told that unless they can enter into the debates of the third, fourth and fifth centuries of the Christian era with full understanding they cannot develop a vital Christian theology. But the preacher was in fact begging several questions that must not be begged. If a full scriptural basis of theology is to be laid for the Burmese Christians, they must accept what is Hellenistic Greek along with what is Hebrew. Some nations may have instinctive links with Old Testament thought and imagery; the American Negro undoubtedly has such imaginative appreciations, and *Green Pastures*, in spite of its sophistication and sentimentality, reinforces the evidence provided by such spirituals as 'Go down, Moses' and by Negro preaching and devotion. But in fact any fully biblical view of life brings in the Greek along with the Jew, and it unites them in one body without circumcision. The Burmese and the Bushmen are the successors of the Greeks as they enter the new covenant, and they do so on the same terms as the Greeks did. This is the scriptural record of God's mighty acts. They must begin from this, though they have the right to interpret it according to the enlightenment of their minds by the Holy Spirit.

In so far as they seek to interpret God's acts by the aid of the Holy Spirit and do so without enforced subjection to other generations' schemes of interpretation, they are in fact very likely to find that no earlier experience is in fact alien or irrelevant. A real sharing among the existing churches is still mostly in the future. It is not at all immediately evident that the Orthodox and the Pentecostalists, who entered the World Council at the same

time, can contribute much as yet to each other's theological thinking or enrich each other's life. Yet the whole ecumenical principle is at stake here,[5] and the tension between the development of particular traditions and an entering into the heritage of all is a tension necessary to the church's very life. So the actual 'Orthodox' tradition, Byzantine (or East Roman) as indeed it is, and then Russian, is yet in some important respects still Greek; and it is part of that which God has given for the benefit of all, even of latter-day iconoclasts. It is a pity that so far interest has been far more liturgical than theological on the part of Anglicans, and that Baptists are somewhat inhibited in approach to the Orthodox by the past attitude of that church to their Baptist brethren in Russia. One may hope for something better in this respect.[6] However, this is a very long-term consideration and there are more immediate matters to be considered. The historical encounters of faith and reason are not 'old, unhappy, far-off things and battles long ago': there is a kind of 'recapitulation' of the past of the church in its present life, even though that present life has always novelty and fresh opportunity. This is the fact that the 'reformed' tradition is sometimes slow to recognize as far as the first fifteen centuries of the church are concerned. Reformation in obedience to scripture is always incumbent upon the church, and constructions of the human mind in all generations are always under judgment—hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?— and yet lessons can be learnt from all past encounter and these lessons are not to be by-passed. An important lesson is that any philosophical schematizing and formulation is likely to be broken in due time. If it has been elevated into an idol, it will be smashed; for the word of God is ever iconoclastic. No doubt

[5] Those who say that 'of course' the Pentecostalist can contribute nothing to the Orthodox are *not* thinking ecumenically.

[6] The presence of Russian Baptist theological students at Baptist colleges in Britain is a welcome development in recent years. Appreciation of the distinctiveness of the Greek tradition is not, of course, altogether wanting here. Philip Sherrard, *The Greek East and The Latin West* (Oxford 1959), may be found particularly helpful as an introduction to it.

mediaeval Christians who resisted the Schoolmen, and eighteenth century protestants who resisted Calvinist 'scholasticism' were led by the Spirit, and yet neither the *Summa* nor the *Institutes* are to be discarded for this reason. They are only to be discarded if and in so far as they can be shown to be unfaithful witnesses to the whole counsel of God. Ultimately such defect is something which all Christians must come to see under the Spirit's leading. Until they are so brought by the Spirit, relative value must be conceded to the great formulations of the church's past by all the traditions. This is the real justification for attention to Patristics and to mediaeval theology, and not exclusively to reformed theology, by those of the reformed traditions. It is not a keeping up with the Jones's (who are in this case the theological students preparing to serve the other churches) but a keeping up with the dialectic of the Holy Spirit.

Yet the fact remains that Patristic theology and the credal formulations of the past do not represent satisfactorily what may be described in Paul's terms in 1 Corinthians 1, as distinctively 'Greek'. The Greek search for wisdom was a *search*. Acceptance of the foolishness of God which is wiser than man does not, paradoxically, end this search. From its new security the Greek mind still asks, 'How can these things be?', and firmly convinced that these things *are*, prepares to give an account of its faith to everyone who demands it. The relating of revealed truth to man's normal ways of thinking about life, politics and the universe is an unsolvable problem; but Greeks in all ages and in many national costumes can be expected at regular intervals to put forward their solutions to it. In doing so they will not be wasting their time or detracting from the unsearchableness of God; for God is not the gap in our knowledge. Preachers who fail to take account of all this and think they are being 'scriptural' thereby are in fact abjuring an available means of communicating the word to their hearers. No preacher need regard a formal training in philosophy as indispensable; but every preacher who translates truth from one age to another and proves it relevant is engaged in an

enterprise which makes philosophical assumptions about man and about time in relation to man. The preacher as such is not required to solve, or attempt to solve, the philosophical questions which his activity begs: he must preach as dying man to dying men what he feels smartingly; and yet preaching can only do its full work where all that the preacher has to offer has first been offered to God. His own deepest perplexities and his awareness that some of his Christian brethren struggled to unravel these and similar perplexities ought to be part of his offering to God before he preaches. He will not be prophetic if he shuts himself up in an earlier age and ignores its incompatibilities with our age.

Our own generation has been unusually unfortunate in the breakdown of communication between theologians and philosophers. This is at any rate true of Britain and largely true of north America. It is by no means so true of France, Italy and Germany. In Germany itself, the alliance of the 'German Christians' with liberal philosophical theology and Hitler's national socialism brought home to the 'Confessional' church the sharpness of God's challenge of all human wisdom as well as of all human power. Here one might well have predicted a breakdown of all communication between theology and philosophy. But this has not happened, and it was no part of Karl Barth's teaching that it ought to happen: he salutes his own brother who is both a philosopher and a believing Christian.[7] Furthermore, literary and philosophical understanding are required as well as theological skill in order to enter fully into the meaning of what Karl Barth himself has written.

It may be said in answer to this that Barth continues his 'conversation' only with existentialist philosophies, philosophies concerned with man's sense of his destiny and limitation. But this is only true up to a point; for questions of 'existence' lead in the end to questions of 'essence', and the very distinction is one owed

[7] In his essay on *Philosophie und Theologie* in the Festschrift for his brother Heinrich, *Philosophische und Christliche Existenz*, (ed. G. Huler, Basel and Stuttgart, 1960), 93–106.

to Aristotle and the Schoolmen. Nor are existential questions in themselves 'un-Greek'. The wide use of Greek myth and Greek tragic themes by existentialists ought to contradict such an assumption. True, Germanic and Scandinavian influences have been at work as well, and a merely conventional classicism has been challenged by the existentialists; but the raising of fundamental general questions out of personal situations has been a habit of the Greeks from Homer onwards; and though the Greeks thought that poetry was the more natural vehicle of acutely personal problems and utterances, a philosophy of life as a whole (not merely a logic, a physics or even an ethics) became increasingly what was sought in later Greek antiquity to replace the lost environment of a city-state in which men had been totally involved in earlier times. Thus Jaeger shows how the whole *Paideia* of Greece, its culture in the widest sense, had come to be regarded as summed up in its philosophy at the time of fruitful contact of the gospel with Greek culture in the third and fourth centuries.[8] So while the several disciplines of philosophy are not to be confused in an amalgam, the searcher after truth in the Greek tradition in the church will never neglect human questions.

We ought, however, to return to the recent situation in Britain. The theological impact of Barth was a delayed one here. One might almost say that Barth began thinking after the first war and we began thinking only when the second war, and what led up to it, had shown Barth to have been very close to the target all the time. Even so, we tended to reject much of Barth's thought as involving us in unnecessary Teutonic complexities. The simple truth was evident: philosophy was useless and theology should start again and be simply biblical. This sounds admirable. It was assumed that the failure of liberal theology lay in its attempted reconciliation of the Christian faith with evolutionary philosophies and contemporary ethics, and that the substitution of thought-forms derived from the Bible, which would call all this

[8] *Early Christianity and Greek Paideia*, 44–46 for contact at the end of the second century; 70–75 for the fourth century and the Cappadocian Fathers.

in question, was the remedy. But this turned out in fact to be only the supplanting of one set of ideas by another set; it was not a real calling into question, and this was what the situation actually demanded. It was a hectic theological 'come-back', not a serious effort to prove all things, to hold the good and to reject the bad, in the work and thought of the earlier generation of Christian thinkers. We still fail to give the right respect, and criticism, to the thought of our time. We either denounce thought as treachery or we make the faith wear the contemporary clothes whether they fit or not. We still fail to 'prove all things'. Cultus may continue without this 'proving' process, but prophecy will cease, and it will cease for the wrong reasons. It will cease because we dare not hear the word of God for our own time. It must, however, be granted that contemporary philosophy itself has done its utmost to convince the theologians of its irrelevance to and lack of interest in traditional metaphysical and ethical doctrines of all kinds. Indeed, any question asked by a theologian was likely at one time to be blithely dubbed as nonsensical by the philosophers. Nevertheless much happened in parallel. The philosopher studied meanings of words in ordinary speech, the theologian meanings of words in biblical speech. Both tended to say that the only valid laws of thought were those to be deduced empirically from usage of words in meaningful context. Of course the theologian also said that mighty acts of God, which were not words (or at any rate, not words in the philosophers' sense) conditioned all the language they studied; but they never quite settled in their own minds how far these acts were identical with certain events in history, and they never quite expected any philosopher to condone the view of history which their theological statements presupposed.

This state of bewilderment and of mutual distrust has not been without its compensations. It has reminded us that the human intellect working apart from personal involvements of any kind is likely to be sceptical, and to raise doubt whether any evidence is empirical which cannot be predicted to recur under like conditions. This sceptical intellect is, of course, an eminently Greek

thing. Hume's questions about causation and about the identity of personality only took up once more positions arrived at by ancient scepticism. The critical side of Socrates, destroying all conceit of wisdom, was developed by Carneades into a universal scepticism; and the so-called modes of Aenesidemus, formulated in the first century B.C., afford a permanent armoury for all future sceptics. It is unlikely that there will be anything very much of this kind which is new under the sun.

The break between theology and a sceptical philosophy might therefore seem to have brought us a deliverance from false assumptions and to have prepared the ground for uninhibited hearing of the word; for if philosophy destroys *all* affirmations by its own weapons, it can hardly matter whether it challenges religious assumptions or not. Such challenge can then be represented by the theologians as mere intellectual pride and blindness on the philosopher's part. Yet in fact this situation is not so favourable to the gospel as might be supposed. It requires closer analysis. Let us begin not simply by admitting but by strongly asserting all that the most 'rabid' Christian anti-philosopher can say about the limitations of philosophy. The word which takes, breaks and re-makes man can never be captured in a philosophy, and there is no other name under heaven than that of Jesus whereby men can be saved. This truth of the gospel will always be nonsense to the natural man, philosophical or unphilosophical. The danger inherent in all the great systems of theology lies in the fact that because they are intellectually satisfying they may obscure this brutal and unalterable fact, that man whether religious, philosophical or just selfishly 'ordinary', puts Jesus on the cross.

Yet here God acts. Jesus dies for his murderers and God raises him in the glory of the resurrection. But how is the religious, philosophical and selfishly 'ordinary' man to be told his? By the Bible story, by baptism and by the Lord's Supper? By the life of those who faithfully receive these things? Certainly this basic witness is always required, and this God alone provides by his

grace. But this is not a full answer. Is the extension of this witness among men a matter of concern only to God? To think so is to take the view of the ministers in the Northamptonshire Baptist Association who told William Carey that if God intended to save the heathen he would do so without need of Carey's assistance. No doubt the life of the Christian community is a powerful means of preaching, but not if it is uninterpreted; for it then becomes increasingly unapproachable and it gets the remoteness of an order with a rule. Its members come to wear a habit spiritually whether they do so physically or not. No doubt the common worship preaches, but again not without interpretation; and even more than the common life it tends to recede into a cultus with its own devotional language, intelligible to its own initiates but not to the 'profane'.

We now hear increasingly that the layman is a missionary and that he must commend the gospel in his place of work. We do not hear so much about the difficulties which this witness involves. In so far as witness is through behaviour, the differing codes of behaviour in different Christian traditions immediately raise barriers which are not easily transcended by the Christians themselves and are immediately exploited by those who wish to parry the Christian challenge. Paul's skill in setting the Pharisees against the Sadducees is as nothing compared with the skilful involvement of Christians by non-Christians in discussion of the merits and demerits of a glass of beer! Here mutual charity, patience and tolerance are chiefly needed along with fidelity to one's true conscience[9]; but if the Christians are ever to come nearer a 'united front' there must be discussion of ultimate questions of ethics on questions of human freedom, and love of one's neighbour and on the Christian's employment of his bodily powers. This discussion has tended, where it has occurred at all, to concern itself with

[9] It is a grim commentary on Christian fellowship that the wisdom of Paul shown in Romans 14 is so little understood. 'To him that thinketh it sin it is sin', and 'Let everyone be fully persuaded in his own mind' represent a depth of insight and courage which seems to be too great for the rank and file of the Christian community.

programmes which ought to be imposed by legislation on society. This immediately puts the Christian apologist at a disadvantage. His strongest appeal is as a man persuading freely a fellow-man who need not listen to him. Any attempt to call down legions of angels is likely to fail to secure victory. To call in the police is still less persuasive, granted that in certain situations little else can be done.

For since the Christian lives even now in the age which is to come, since he is dead and his life is hid with Christ in God, he cannot claim to be more than a sojourner and a pilgrim in this present age. How then is he to negotiate with the power of this age and the wisdom of this age? Most Christians react against the status of sojourner and pilgrim and denounce their fellows who do acknowledge it as being other-worldly pietists. These Christians who insist on our duty to be this-worldly have some strong points to make. Where can the truth of the kingdom be proclaimed they ask, if not here in present society? Why should Christians put up as candidates for councils or parliaments if they must remain basically apart from their fellow-electors? Did Jesus share our humanity only to remove us from human associations?

It does not make a satisfactory answer to this to say that we are 'strangers and pilgrims' in a spiritual sense or in individual as contrasted with social experience. John Bunyan and William Williams of Pantycelyn have deeply impressed this sense of lonely individual pilgrimage upon us.

> 'When I tread the verge of Jordan
> Bid my anxious fears subside,'

sings William Williams. But Israel was massed in due order to cross Jordan and it must be remembered that the Old Testament knows only a community in pilgrimage; and further that the strangers and pilgrims of Hebrews were recognizable groups of non-citizens present in a *polis*-community of the Greek type. To say that Christians are pilgrims and strangers is therefore to

say that they are not in possession of Canaan or (in more political terms) that they are a group without temporal political power. This fact may well come intensely home to the individual, but it is nevertheless a fact which arises from the individual's place in a group, the Christian *ecclesia*. The *ecclesia* is a stranger in this world, although it is God's church in God's world.

One cannot evade this paradox by saying that this was a true characteristic of the churches before the Roman Empire became officially Christian in the early fourth century but that it has ceased to be so since then. Scripture knows slaves and freemen, we are told, but it does not follow that slavery as a system has scriptural authority. But this is *not* the same kind of question. The 'stranger and pilgrim' status of Christians belongs to the fundamental revelation of man in Christ as already risen with him and so involved for all remaining time in the tension between the heavenly citizenship and the earthly stranger-status which must belong to the Christian whatever his citizen-status and citizen-responsibility may be. A Christian who is a lord mayor or a prime minister must accept this basic tension and cannot escape the judgment of his life and actions by supernatural standards which it involves. The public 'recognition' of Christianity in establishment or code of law cannot make anything right for a Christian which was wrong before, even if it makes certain acts a practical possibility for the first time. The acknowledgment of 'powers that be' as ordained of God to preserve human society from worse chaos, and therefore entitled to obedience from Christians, involves something more than passive obedience when Christians themselves, as citizens, become responsible elements in these 'powers that be' and wield some of this power themselves. These are problems no Christian may evade, and yet they do not cover the whole question of the Christian in society. The tension of the two worlds is present. It increases, and is meant to increase, the more faithfully a man does his public duty. The Christian has to commend that more excellent way which is known only to those who are risen with Christ as being the perfect law of liberty; yet

he cannot and must not impose this way on his fellows. He himself will only be capable of living out this ultra-resurrection life at a considerable remove from its full power and glory; yet he must aim to pass on what it proves possible to pass on in a given social context. Politics for him must be very decidedly 'the art of the possible'. Yet the social vision and concern of the 'Christian Socialist' is truly and permanently a part of Christian political action just as much as the concern for maintaining rough justice and order in the world of competing selfishnesses realistically understood, which is the merit of the 'Christian Conservative'. The maintenance of the order is something requiring the exercise of power and compulsion—the magistrate beareth not the sword for nothing. But the offering to men in this world of the reconciliation and glory of the next in terms of bread and butter is at base a matter of persuasion—here a little, there a little. Of course some of what is offered and accepted may be codified in legislation and enforced; but the amount accepted will vary from place to place, as witness the present-day North American objections to 'social medicine'.

All this work of persuading involves the Christian in political thinking and negotiation, an attitude basically different from the prophetic 'Thus saith the Lord'. This is not to deny or belittle the truly prophetic function of the church. But Britain and the United States are not Israel under the old covenant; for most Christians in these western countries rightly refuse to recognize themselves as the lost ten tribes! The prophetic message for society, over and above the calling of the individual to repentance, is neither to be abandoned under the new covenant nor is it entitled to impose itself as having unquestioned authority. Every advance must be argued, negotiated and accepted, and, for this 'practical' and 'applied' philosophy, the old Greek ways of thinking and speaking retain their value, and those who can use them as Christians have full scope for their talents. This is not to say that Plato's *Republic* or Aristotle's *Politics* is a complete guide to modern politics or a blue-print for a Christian society; but it is to say that

even if with Professor K. R. Popper[10] one thinks Plato a disaster and a 'social engineering' the only way forward, the political thinking of Plato and Aristotle may still help one more than the *Leviathan* of Hobbes or the Communist manifesto. For this Greek thought comes ultimately from those open-air assemblies of all the citizens where the herald regularly asked, 'Who wishes to speak?'

But persuasion is not needed only in the Christian's political and social dealing with his neighbour: he needs to understand how to commend the saving gospel itself by persuasion. Many Christians suppose apologetic has no relation to evangelism or that the latter ought to be offensive and the former defensive. Someone might perhaps be tempted to say that if evangelism is not to be offensive it had better be apologetic! But is not this to give in completely to the natural man and to be ashamed to own our Lord? This sense of possible disloyalty and defeatism tends to haunt us when we consider Christian apologetic. It is therefore very important to understand what the real place of this apologetic is as a valid part of Christian witness.

One may distinguish two very distinct functions: that of commending the truth of the gospel to an unbeliever and that of facing the difficulties in thinking and living as a Christian once the gospel has in fact been accepted. A true witness to Christ, lay or ministerial, will always be trying to function in both of these ways and in so doing will be a Christian apologist. The former function, of commending the truth to the unbeliever, requires a special kind of humility and patience. There is real gain in the insistence among

[10] K. R. Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, has now appeared as a paperback. The first volume contains his hostile assessment of Plato. It is impossible to enter into the controversy which this book has raised. The most circumstantial answer is by G. de Vries, *Antisthenes Redivivus* (North Holland Publishing Co., Amsterdam, 1952) which points out mistakes and misquotations one by one. A good summary of Plato's philosophy written by a man who was not a professed 'Platonist' is the work by G. C. Field in the Home University Library, *The Philosophy of Plato*. A sympathetic interpretation of Plato's *Laws* is *Plato's Cretan City* by Glenn R. Morrow, (for Princeton University Press by Oxford University Press, 1961).

protestant theologians in our day that one cannot and should not attempt to prove the existence of God in the traditional way: that God is self-authenticating. This is a basic fact of all apologetic:

God is his own interpreter,
And he will make it plain.

Yet this does not mean that we ought to abstain from all talk about the nature of ultimate reality and the first cause. One can, of course, say that 'all other theologies are not about God'. This is a permissible shock tactic on occasions, but not a permissible normal approach. God begins his activity where he is, but we must begin ours with our fellow-men where we and they are, intellectually as in every way. We must sit where they sit, and it is not enough simply to 'be astonished'. From the position of involvement which such 'astonishment' brings we have to ask them and ourselves 'What do you make of it all?' no less than 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' In doing this we are not eating the forbidden fruit so as to know good and evil and become as gods. We are listening to the problems of our fellow-men and their answers to these problems so as to help them towards that kind of agnosticism which goes with a sense of the need of God which is indeed 'all the fitness he requireth'. Anyone who engages in this kind of apologetic is more likely than other evangelists are to realize all the time that only the Spirit of God can convert men and women and that all human witness can only be subservient. But it must be as thorough as it can be made.

This function of apologetic, conscious commendation of the faith, is always to be supplemented by the other function, wrestling with the difficulties of the faithful. As a matter of fact the honest and thorough-going performance of this second function has often been used of God to hasten conversion. Job has always been a better evangelist than his comforters. But the rank and file of the church are nevertheless called to be apologists in this same sense according to the measure of their faith. Here, though

humility and patience are still necessary, complete sincerity is the greatest asset for the apologist. He must be willing constantly to admit that he does not understand and cannot explain, yet he must see that the demand for some explanation is not to be shirked as being unlawful. The old saying that an intellectual difficulty always hides a moral weakness is pernicious. No doubt 'rationalization' in the psychological sense does take place, and very often people do not realize the real source of their doubts; but if this psychological fact is to be exploited by Christians so as to quiet all awkward questioning, how can we meet the counter-challenge that faith as well as unfaith is an expression of unconscious urges? The Christian must believe that he can, by God's grace, break out of himself into a real wider universe. If he believes this and seeks to live in this wider universe, he will find difficult questions arising which he is bound to try to solve even if he never succeeds in this life in doing so. We walk by faith, not by sight; but we must always use our eyes nevertheless, even if we have had to pluck one of them out in order to enter into life!

It will naturally be asked how ordinary members of the church can be competent in philosophical discussions of ultimate questions when we have already agreed that a philosophical training is not to be demanded even of a trained minister? The answer is simple. Discussion of the universe and of problems of life and society goes on about us all the time: any gathering of men or women, in the shop or in the tea-break, may bring up any kind of question. Theology is by no means excluded from football matches, public houses and race tracks whether or not orthodox believers sustain its discussion there. We all know how such discussions 'flare up' suddenly in some human need or situation. Often there is some pointing (in very unorthodox language) to a Christian answer, and yet very often that answer seems incredible to the company because the world does not appear to be made that way; because miracles do not happen and 'science' proves that they cannot happen. There is no escaping the apparent incompatibility between the world of the Bible, where personal actions,

divine, human and demonic, seem able of themselves to determine events, and the world we know where actions and choices are those of men and women whose lives seem controlled by regular physical, biological and psychological patterns, into which they seem necessarily fitted as interrelated parts of a whole, like the pieces of a child's puzzle.

This apparent incompatibility lies behind the perennial discussion of 'science and religion' and gives that discussion its sharp edges. No variation in the scientific picture of the universe will soften this problem. The ordinary church member cannot be expected to understand the full range of questions involved or to get far outside the prevailing thought-forms of his own day; but there will always be among believers those capable of facing the problems involved in a wider context, and these have a duty not to shirk them. Some must even make it their main contribution to be alert to the whole range of these problems and to assess the value of earlier attempts at their solution. Somewhere in the Christian fellowship there is need for the thinker, and it is not presumptuous to call him the 'Greek', in the church. This is not to deny that Indian, Chinese and other nearer-eastern ways of thought can help us all in stating and attempting to solve all these questions. The Greeks, when they first began to think scientifically, undoubtedly borrowed what they could from Egypt and Babylon, and the Indian affinities of the transmigration doctrines among the Pythagoreans have often been pointed out.[11] What is distinctly 'Greek' however is the disinterested and uninhibited search for explanatory hypotheses. Anyone who engages in such enquiry can be called a 'Greek' whether or not he is one outwardly.

[11] The question of Oriental influence on Plato has been very fully discussed in fairly recent times, though less in the last few years. For a bibliography see the list compiled by H. Cherniss in the fourth and fifth volumes of *Lustrum* (Göttingen, 1959, 60). Items 182, 212, 241–262, 1366 and parts of 1368–70 are relevant. J. Bidez may be named as the protagonist of the Oriental influences (his Gifford Lectures of 1939 are the most accessible statement), and the contrary view is stated by an Iranian expert, J. Duchesne-Guillemin, in *The Western Response to Zoroaster* (Oxford 1958). Mlle S. Pétrement is probably right in saying that Plato is a kind of dualist but no Manichean.

There is a long tradition of Christian thinkers who have found links between the greater systems of thought and the revelation in Christ. Justin Martyr found no satisfaction in any of the Greek systems but did not discard the philosopher's mantle after conversion because he saw Christ as the absolute and final embodiment of the Logos which had been partially expressed in the philosophers.[12] This view, which Clement of Alexandria re-affirmed in his famous saying that philosophy was schoolmaster to the Greeks, as the Law was to the Jews, to bring them to Christ, has always been a 'minority' view among Christians. As it stands, it seems in conflict with Paul's insistence that by the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God and that the foolishness of God is wiser than men. Yet this Pauline truth ought not to encourage mental laziness or to fix doctrinal fetters on the course of thinking. Justin and Clement (and all who are of their tradition, like Cudworth and the other Platonists of our own seventeenth century) are at fault in so far as they leave out of full consideration the reversal of all human values and prides in the cross. This omission is fatal. But it is an omission to which other traditions than the Greek tradition are also liable. One can easily forget that the cross is not Jewish either: it is a stumbling-block to the Jews. This is not only because one hanging from a tree is accursed. It represents the reversal of the view of the good life as a success-story with God's blessing on it. Judaism along with Calvinistically inspired capitalism holds to this view of the good life very tenaciously, and the weakness of God is as troublesome to the Jews as the folly of God is to the Greeks. A religion based on the Torah does not concentrate its attention on Job, Jeremiah and the Suffering Servant. As a schoolmaster the Law does not take its pupils the whole way. Thus the Jew who enters the new covenant only then enters into the deeper meaning of the old covenant—or so, at any rate, Paul believed; and he spoke out of the experience

[12] Jaeger has brief but very valuable comment on this in his *Early Christianity on Greek Paideia*, 26–35. His distinction between Greek and Roman approaches there is especially clear.

of his own life. The converted Jew, then, meditates on the new meaning of 'power' while the converted Greek meditates on the new meaning of 'wisdom'. Both meditations are at once necessary and profitable.

But 'meditation' comes close to 'contemplation', and we must now look at a Christian attitude which is against 'contemplation' among Christians. This view, to be fair, does not attack contemplation of divine truth. Yet its whole emphasis is on action, and it insists that man in Genesis is commanded to subdue the world, not to understand it. This view lies behind the approval of 'fundamental research' if and only if it may lead to a release of nuclear power. All this has close affinities with Francis Bacon's teaching under the first Elizabeth. He dismissed Aristotle as a manufacturer of verbal analyses rather than a true scientist; and rejected him also as the philosophic guide of Roman Catholicism, for Bacon was a staunch protestant. He believed that technical investigations and inventions served man's need and expressed true goodwill and charity, subduing the world to better man's lot on earth. This, he believed, was the true natural science which alone could work for the greater glory of God.

We should note, however, that Bacon, and in fact several of the founders of the Royal Society later on, combined the acceptance of the biblical account of creation with an acceptance of what was fundamentally an atomist view of the universe. God created the material universe in the shape of indestructible particles of matter in motion. Without this basis their experimental work could not have proceeded. The view had its merit in that it made any kind of pantheism or world-soul a needless hypothesis and clearly and sharply distinguished creator and creation. By isolating the creation as lifeless and malleable it gave free rein to the technologies.[13] But it side-stepped the greater

[13] A sympathetic study of Bacon by Benjamin Farrington (*Francis Bacon, Philosopher of Industrial Science*, London, 1951, published by Lawrence and Wishart), is to be recommended for its clear statement of Bacon's firm opposition to Plato, Aristotle and all the 'contemplative' and 'metaphysical' philosophies, which he saw as making men vain with opinions and blind to needs which call for deeds.

questions that man's mind will always raise. The raising of these wider questions is a necessary safeguard against the domination of technologies. Universities do not have literary, philosophic and fine art studies only for traditional reasons or just to provide the modern equivalent of an early Victorian young lady's 'accomplishments' to a privileged group in society. If life is to be 'bettered', the whole range of human experience is relevant. A university whose only faculties were theology and engineering would not be a true university. Yet some of Bacon's plans for his Solomon's House in the *New Antlantis* seem almost to come to this if one defines 'engineering' widely enough to cover all applied sciences pursued only as applied; and this has been the secret creed of more than one educator and philanthropist since Bacon's day. Bacon might have hoped that simple study of scripture by the technologists would prevent them from ever bombing Hiroshima, but it did not. It may be countered, 'You had your moral philosophy in 1944–5 also, and nevertheless Hiroshima was bombed.' That is true enough; but the challenge occasioned by this exploitation of man's power over the creation is one which neither strictly theological nor strictly technological answers seem to satisfy. Both political and philosophical thinking is called for here, and we need an international law which embodies the

It was this 'practical' approach which made him unwilling to accept the findings of Copernicus which he considered to be mathematical conceits. The Atomists likewise turned from the more advanced Pythagorean astronomies in their day. No doubt it is an over-simplification to speak of Bacon as accepting 'atomism'. His doctrine of 'powers' had some relation to Stoic physics and his 'latent structure' and 'latent process' owe something to the Aristotelianism he rejects. But essentially he works with an atomist universe and is only concerned with powers and structures in so far as they lead to power to modify nature. In this desire to modify nature, however, he goes beyond Democritus, the only Greek for whom he had real respect. (It is perhaps worth adding what ought to be obvious, that Plato was against contemplation of truth without social conscience. His philosophers were to be kings indeed but very hard-working kings, all learning their human task the hard way. He also recognised that potters must teach their sons their trade. His veto on trade for full citizens in his *Laws* comes from his sense of the importance of political life and duties, not from a desire to perpetuate a lazy contemplative élite kept going by slaves.)

insights of faith but stands as law on its own secure foundations. Man is too complex to be saved by the most enlightened planning, and while theology can analyse and reveal his folly at its depth, the outworking of the way of redemption in the particular context is something not to be achieved without bringing in for their due judgment and evaluation the truths of contemplative no less than of practical human experience. Theology as such should keep clear of this kind of outworking.

There is no doubt a warning in Bacon's strictures on a purely 'academic' philosophy which Christians ought to heed: a Christian philosopher may not abdicate his responsibility to witness to Christ in his whole life. But the vital issue is whether a Christian who does nothing to produce more food or supply any material need or service is thereby failing in his responsibility. Service may be 'by hand or brain', but can hard thinking on the nature of the universe and on the mystery of life and death be service by brain? The Greek has a place in the church if a man may give his life primarily to intellectual activity and yet be both responsible and compassionate as a disciple of Christ. This is not an easy or simple standard of life and behaviour, and like all Christian behaviour can only be sustained by grace through faith. But it nevertheless is one way of living the Christian life. There are many deep tensions and distrusts which could disappear if this truth could really be accepted. Most students know something of them. Our Anglo-American pragmatic society in which Bacon and Aristotle are still unreconciled needs especially to face this question. We tend to be over-ready to seize on the command to 'subdue' the word as legitimating all our love of power and action. Sinful man 'subduing' the world when he gets beyond digging to support his family is likely to produce finery and to bomb Hiroshima. God's subduing of the world was in the life of one whom the winds and waves obeyed, and him he raised on the third day.

There are inadequacies no less serious in modern attempts to 'reconcile' the religious and scientific views of the world which are content to point to human experience at a personal level on

one side and to demand honest unfettered reading-off of natural facts on the other. They are quite right in demanding scientific freedom and unfettered investigation at each level and in insisting that levels are different. They are also valuable in reminding us that 'unified' solutions of these questions are liable rather to blurr than to unify. But they fall short of any answer to the basic puzzles, not merely why faith and obedience caused the walls of Jericho to fall down, but also why pattern and rule, as deducible from physical observation, seem to have little to do with personal decisions which make history. What then of the entrance into history and nature of what is beyond both? Yet in the incarnation, the cross and the resurrection that which is beyond nature and history is seen to be actually bound up with what it transcends.

The attempt of Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Greek, Indian and Chinese thought has been to find some account both of the origin and of the basis-for-continuance of the whole system of existence, personal and impersonal alike. It is easy to look with hindsight on these solutions and demonstrate their shortcomings. It is easy to denounce all their first principles as so many idols displacing the living God. But unless we are prepared to say that God intends the new man in Christ to be taken out of the normal activities of human nature altogether, there is no case for branding the metaphysical urge as uniquely and basically sinful. Still less is there a case for doing so because the Jews in biblical times were less metaphysical in their thinking than other nations were. Any elevation of one system or solution as final or any claim for it as superior to revealed truth (like Nietsche's calling Christianity 'a vulgar Platonism') must be firmly resisted by Christian thinkers; but Paul gives those thinkers a very wide field to work in as he sees God's purpose to be 'to sum up in Christ all things in heaven and earth'.[14] The cosmic thought of Ephesians and of Colossians is closely related to the redemptive purpose, and that purpose itself looks to a consummation, not to an annihilation, of the created uni-

[14] Eph. 1. 10. One may call Ephesians 'Pauline' and Colossians 'Paul' without affecting the point at issue.

verse. Its form and fashion may be changed, but it will not be lost.

The Christian thinker ought never to be so beguiled by a philosophical system that he regards it as an indispensable aid to the expression of the cosmic meaning of Christ. On the other hand, there are ways of thinking about these matters which have been passed on to us by Christians who sought to construct Christian philosophies in which the great systems were sanctified to a new use. Stoicism might have seemed to offer most material for such transformed use, and yet in fact its contribution proved to be less than Plato and Aristotle could provide.[15]

The Reformed tradition has, in the main, been suspicious of Plato as well as hostile to Aristotle. Study of Plato at St Andrews was officially discountenanced up to the end of the eighteenth century, and much present-day Scottish thought might seem to endorse their forbears' judgment, so far have we moved from the age of the Cairds and even from the St Andrews of John Burnet and Alfred Edward Taylor. Taylor's Gifford Lectures of 1928, *The Faith of a Moralist*, came too late to be fully appreciated for its blend of Christian faith, Platonic philosophical bent and moral philosophy in the British tradition. Those defenders of the faith who relied on St Thomas Aquinas alone did not care for the way this English high churchman set about his task, and the new Barthians were only too ready for their part to call the whole enterprise in question. Yet constructive effort to commend faith to men's reason and conscience must always be made, and it is to be hoped that Taylor will have successors in such effort.

[15] On the ethical side the differences were bound to exceed the affinities, though the concepts of conscience and duty among the Stoics did not lose their force when the law and commandments of God came to be the one source of life and authority; in fact Stoicism was thought by Josephus to be akin to Pharisaism. On the physical side, the doctrine of πνεῦμα might have been expected to have influenced Christian thought, but its influence seems in fact to have been marginal. This pantheistic rationalization and acceptance of pagan deities probably turned the Christians most decisively away from them though their 'material God' might have had some significance. See H. E. W. Turner, *The Pattern of Christian Truth* (Oxford, Bampton Lectures, 1954) 446 sqq., and, on the Stoic physics itself, S. Sambursky *Physics of the Stoics* (London, 1959).

In the case of Aristotle we have the unique and monumental effort to distil and employ the essence of his thinking and to use it in Christ's service which is the *Summa* of St Thomas. It involved a sharp distinction between revealed and natural theological truth, for Aristotle had taught that the world as a whole never had a beginning in history. Yet the great analytical distinctions of Aristotle, form and matter, potency and actuality, seemed destined to find fulfilment in a new Christian interpretation of the universe. Aristotle's sense of the complete psycho-somatic unity of living beings (which made him object to transmigration doctrines implying that any soul can enter any body) seemed destined to serve a more biblical view both of man's nature and of living nature as a whole. Individual immortality had somehow to be read into Aristotle's enigmatic doctrine of an 'active reason' which is apparently impersonal or perhaps interpersonal; but on the whole it seemed that Aristotle could assist in answering not only philosophical questions but theological ones too: 'transubstantiation' is a term one could never have expected to arise had there never been an Aristotle.

It is quite impossible in a few sentences like these to pay adequate tribute to the triumph the *Summa* represents in the long story of Christian thinking. There is no doubt that all its critics can learn much from it, and the appearance of a new translation of it into English is to be welcomed. Yet we must also recognize that the wrong things have happened to it. By its authority in the Roman church it has come to be regarded as presenting an infallible philosophy. Loyal thinkers in that church are ready to face present-day philosophical and sociological questions, but are convinced that if they re-interpret St Thomas they have an answer. Thus Thomism is basically intolerant of all solutions attempted from different premises: it almost insists that Christian philosophical thinking is bound in the end to turn to the solutions explicitly or implicitly contained in St Thomas's Christianization of Aristotle.

It is salutary to remind ourselves that St Thomas's Aristotelian-

ism did not go unchallenged in the centuries between his own day and the Reformation. Not only were there philosophers of the nominalist schools, among whom William of Ockham is of the highest importance; but there was the religious reaction to pure intellectualism among the Franciscans; and it is notable, but not often noted, that Wyclif not only translated a gospel into English but wrote several treatises from a kind of Platonic standpoint in the scholastic debates, and sought to confute St Thomas from this philosophical standpoint. This long and complex story can only be hinted at in this passing summary, but it is very important to remember that the Roman church before the Reformation was by no means 'monolithic' in its support of St Thomas.

The basic challenge of the early Franciscans and of the reformers alike was that St Thomas had accommodated the wisdom of this world to the faith only too well. What Paul called 'the foolishness of God', the calling in question of human wisdom, ought to leave some noticeable trace on any subsequent Christian thinking. Aristotle's reverence for nature and its laws is permanently valuable, but it is not enough to think of Grace as perfecting nature without radical challenge. *Gratia ita tollit naturam ut perficiat* (grace overturns nature, but in such a manner that it perfects nature) would have preserved the true status of creation and acknowledged its due importance. *Gratia non tollit naturam sed perficit* (grace does not remove but perfects nature) cannot be the whole Christian truth, for it underestimates grace and overestimates nature.

Because of this traditional enthronement of Aristotle in the Roman church, the way forward would seem to lie with those who refuse altogether to bow to this authoritative status of Aristotle's thought but nevertheless can understand and appreciate what is of lasting worth and meaning for Christians in Aristotle's achievement. It is more possible to do this now than it has been for many centuries; partly because the understandable negative reaction of the reformers to Scholasticism need no longer determine the attitude of Christians of reformed tradition, partly also

because the life and work of Aristotle himself has come to be understood far more fully because of the work of scholars, among whom Werner Jaeger was pre-eminent, who have traced his development both as a pupil of Plato in the Academy and as head of the Lyceum. The man and the system can now be seen in truer perspective. This, together with the whole tendency towards the study of ancient Greek philosophy in its historical setting and development is of first importance as enabling Christian thinkers to assess more fully what this thought has still to offer for those who seek a Christian philosophy.

Plato has never been allowed the validity for Christians which has, indirectly of course, been given to Aristotle; yet he has profoundly influenced Christian thought in many generations. Even more in his case the understanding of his life and work in its historical setting can be of assistance to appreciation of the permanent value of his thought. Such historical understanding will make it less of a habit to judge Plato as a heretical Christian rather than as a pagan living four centuries before Christ outside the old covenant. The immediate effect of closer attention to Plato's life has no doubt been to create a generally hostile attitude to him as an aristocratic and authoritarian 'reactionary'. The very fact that he can be seen in so many lights, as a Fascist, as recommending a Genevan rule of the saints, as founder in advance of the Inquisition, at least shows that any Christian thinker has to reckon with him. It may be worth while, therefore, to make certain observations both on his politics and on his metaphysics which may indicate some of the balancing factors which make the present-day denigrations and condemnations of him so lop-sided.

Plato was Greek in his inability to look beyond the *polis* as the natural organic social entity; but he did not wish to uphold an aristocracy of blood, or even a 'closed society' in the strict sense of that term as defined by Popper. He acknowledged and did not lament the passing of such a society and the inadequacy of *nomos*, the ancestral tradition, as the guide of life. This statement may be checked by anyone who will read the last third of the seventh

book of the *Republic*. Philosophy must, like Socrates did, upset and question all the established ideas; but it must not turn men into puppies rending each other with arguments. Can anyone who forgets the dumb English yokel and remembers the volatile and argumentative young Greek blame Plato for saying so? Yet it is philosophy that must re-establish truth: tradition, which is outmoded, cannot do so. Moreover in spite of all the selective breeding there will be people of the lower classes to be promoted and of the upper classes to be demoted because they do or do not possess souls fit for philosophical training. Plato was in fact trying to apply to politics in all its relations the moral and intellectual consequences of a truth which he regarded as mathematically certain and self-evidencing. The risks this involves are cognate with the risks of assuming that a rule of the saints can be set up in this present world: the risks lie in human pride and love of power. Plato knew something of this risk, but ought not the promoters of the Inquisition and the elders of Geneva (or of Massachussetts) to have known more? None of these would have been anxious to claim spiritual kinship with Plato, but he could have humanized their zeal had they listened to him. Plato does indeed expel the incorrigible atheist in the end, to be buried outside the frontier; but he can hardly be said to have sought previously to save his soul by torture.

In metaphysics Plato may be said to believe in two worlds while Aristotle believes in one. This makes him dangerous to Christian thought if his division of reality is taken to be a true philosophical account of the relation of earth to heaven, of this world to the world which is to come, in revealed truth. When Paul says 'we look not at the things which are seen but at the things which are not seen' he goes on to say that the seen things belong to this present time, the unseen to the age that is to be.[16]

[16] 2 Cor. 4. 18. The words do not refer to a dualism of 'material' and 'spiritual' in the present; though it is a somewhat partisan interpretation of *αἰώνια* to make it refer only to temporal *future*: it is rather a present about to be revealed, an inheritance undefiled and unfading (1 Pet. 1. 4 refers to the same 'treasure in

Stephen can forgive his murderers because he looks up and sees Jesus at the right hand of God. Yet even so the Platonic distinction between the true, good and eternally real world and the tentative approximations to it in the flux which is in space and time is a distinction which has a bearing on Christian truth. Plato did not in fact despise or neglect the approximations in space and time. His philosophical statesman was to translate 'what he sees there' into the deeds and characters of men in present society. The good craftsman who framed the universe has made so good a job of it that the universe is the image of its maker, it is a god present to sense. When the Alexandrians seized on the injunction, 'See thou do everything according to the pattern showed thee on the mount' as a kind of bridge-text between Moses and Plato they were on the right track. We have already seen that the Socratic and Platonic doctrine of the soul-body relation is not to be equated with Manichean dualism (probably Iranian in origin and certainly not a natural Greek product) though it cannot be equated either with the Pauline antithesis of flesh and spirit. We may, however, note a valuable insight of Mlle. Simone Petrement in her book *Le dualisme chez Platon, les gnostiques et les manicheéns.*[17] She says there that dualism seems to belong to systems which cannot belittle the sheer contradiction of good and evil in ethical experience, systems which are not content to see evil simply as the absence of good. Platonism itself tended towards monism in Neoplatonism, but is probably of most value for Christian thought where, as in the *Gorgias* for instance, good and evil are seen as poles apart, and man's eternal destiny is seen as determined by his choice between them.[18]

Finally, by elevating his Form of the Good as ultimately real

heaven', and the author to the Hebrews seems conscious of the two meanings of οὐσία, philosophical and financial, when he speaks of our 'better and more enduring substance'). (Heb. 10. 34).

[17] Paris, Presses Universitaires, 1947.

[18] The notes by E. R. Dodds on the myth in the closing pages of the *Gorgias* will, I think, show that this is so. (Plato, *Gorgias*, ed. E. R. Dodds (Oxford, 1959, 374–383), though the editor is not concerned to show it.

Plato is thought to have found ultimate truth and value in what is impersonal. Here too there are certain qualifications that need to be made. Plato reacted against the gods of Homer and all gods who lied, cheated and changed their shape at will. It was his sense of what made a god divine which set him against theriomorphic and anthropomorphic divinities as he knew them. That this sense of the divine which guided him was inadequate is not surprising; what is surprising is that it was as adequate as it was. It would seem to be legitimate in our own day for bishops to question whether God can be called personal. Because the bishop of Woolwich begins from German thinking which may be called 'existentialist', his conclusions are less likely to be branded as 'dangerous' in some quarters than they would be if he had begun from Plato. One may, however, respectfully ask how the 'I—Thou' relationship survives in such thought as the bishop's. In fact the attribution of personality to God in an unworthy and limiting sense and of creating him in our image is always to be guarded against: his ways are not our ways nor his thoughts our thoughts. It is surprising how much light may be thrown on this truth by a pagan philosopher born in Athens. A refusal to be satisfied by gods made in man's image is a real step on the way to revealed truth.[19]

In fine, the active study of Greek thought by Christian thinkers is likely still to be a rewarding exercise. But we have left our ordinary laymen in shops and offices a long way behind, it would seem. There is danger here. The fault of Gnosticism in distinguishing enlightened Christians from simple believers as a superior race has often infected the whole church. The view that the laity can only be instructed in the faith and can never instruct in it is no less a heresy. If both these heresies are to be shunned, we must insist that in the Christian fellowship there is to be a vital

[19] Behind the *τύποι περὶ θεολογίας* of Plato, *Republic*, ii, 379, lies the criticism of Xenophanes of Colophon in the sixth century B.C. Ethiopians have black snub-nosed gods, he said, and Thracians blue-eyed, red-haired ones. Horses and lions would fashion gods in their shape if they could be sculptors.

sharing between those who can understand and enter into the great questions by their powers of reason and imagination and those whose experience and gifts in the intellectual sphere are more restricted but who have the same life to live and the same death to die. It may be impracticable to interest the latter group in a 'course' of simplified philosophy, but it is important to realize that they are every one of them apologists for the faith, seeking to persuade others in the sight of God. We may, if we come to pride ourselves too much on our knowledge of philosophy, learn a useful lesson from them. They are likely to know well what we need to learn, that the Christian apologist may often find his adversary too good for him intellectually. This is true, but the Christian must not cease to think, cease to argue or, above all, cease to love on this account. God chooses the foolish things of this world to confound the wise if they use all the wisdom they have while not ultimately relying on it. To know Jesus is to share the fellowship of his sufferings and the power of his resurrection, and to be aware that we have not yet attained and are not already made perfect; but we must press on with all that we have; and those who have minds must use them. God has called Greek and Jew: God has called Greek and barbarian. His gifts are not subject to recall, and we each have our account to render to him.

For the Jews must have a sign and the Greeks must have a philosophy. But we are heralds of the truth that the anointed Messiah has been put to death on a cross. This is scandal to Jew, folly to Greek. But to those who are being delivered from death—to Jew and Greek alike—he is the anointed Deliverer who is at once God's power and God's wisdom. For man can never be as wise as God's foolishness nor as strong as God's weakness.

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Greek words have been transliterated for the purposes of the index.