THE COLLEGE OF THE BIBLE SPRING LECTURES 1958

Contemporary Thought and the Return to Religion

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THE COLLEGE OF THE BIBLE
LEXINGTON, KENTUCKY
1960

CONTENTS

FOREWORD

This small book is an attempt to understand and assess the significance of a twofold religious revival in America today—the revival of religious practice manifested in the statistics of religious activity and the renaissance of theological thinking manifested in the religious literature that comes from our printing presses. One of these movements is a plant of native growth and the other an importation from the soil of Europe, but together they raise many questions. Do they have common psychological roots in the history of our times? Do they give each other mutual support? Are they valid expressions of the spirit of true religion? What effect will they have on the values of our secular culture? Can they stand examination under the searchlight of science and with the critical tools of contemporary philosophical analysis? Can we use these instruments of modern knowledge, in psychology, the natural sciences and philosophy, to refine, purify and strengthen these two movements, which now fill Christian hearts with hope and Christian minds with exciting, and sometimes anxious, questions? These lectures are the result of an attempt by one Christian thinker, trained in the tradition of American religious thought, and in that of Anglo-American empirical philosophy, to supply some answers.

I am grateful to The College of the Bible, of Lexington, Kentucky, for an invitation to deliver the annual Spring Lectures at the seminary in 1958, for this was the occasion that caused me to formulate in this way the results of my recent thinking. To the president and staff of that institution I wish to extend thanks for their gracious hospitality on the occasion of the presentation of the lectures. My thanks are also due to the president of Texas Christian University for the invitation to repeat part of these lectures as the McFadin Lectures in January, 1959, and for similar hospitality at that time. The present volume includes material presented only on this latter occasion.

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Feb. 28, 1959

CHAPTER I

Motives of the Return to Religion

HALF A CENTURY AGO it was not uncommon in intellectual circles to hear confident predictions of the coming rapid decline of the churches, or their transformation into social centers with an ethical uplift motive. These anticipations were based on the growing acceptance of an evolutionary philosophy which had undermined the alleged evidence of providential interference and design in nature, and the development of biblical criticism which refuted traditional conceptions of an authoritative revelation in the bible. The prophets of the decline of religion believed that removal of what had been regarded as rational evidence in favor of religion would result in a general loss of faith and abandonment of religious practice. Today this expectation has had to be abandoned. The evolutionary philosophy of nature has attained general acceptance, and the critical view of the Bible is more generally known and widely accepted than ever before, but in spite of these losses of rational support collectors of statistics report a rising tide of faith and a widespread return to the practices of religion.

Is It Failure of Nerve?

Among those who are unsympathetic to religion, and also among some of its friends, this return to religion, in the face of loss of rational support for some of its familiar features, has been put down to emotional influences, to "failure of nerve," fear, loss of confidence in the social order, to man's loss of faith in man, due to the cataclysms of the 20th century—two world wars, a world-wide economic collapse, the barbarisms of totalitarian governments, the success of Communist revolutions, and the threat of atomic annihilation. The psalmist long ago observed that when men are "at their wits' end" then "they cry unto the Lord in their troubles."[1]

1. Psalm 107:27-28.

This return to religion in the face of declining evidence for it has therefore been interpreted as an effect of fear, the insecurity of this world turning men's thoughts to look for help and hope in another, the loss of faith in man turning men in despair to place a trembling and uncertain faith in God.

Naturalistic philosophers have found support in the theories of Sigmund Freud for this interpretation of the contemporary rise in interest in religion. To Freud, the belief in God is an illusion which has been useful in the past but has lost its reasonableness and value with the advance of science. The idea of God is a product of wishful thinking, a substitute father-image, created by adult man to console himself and bolster his courage as he loses the protection and guidance of his natural father and finds he must face a world of mysterious forces which seem either hostile or indifferent to his fate. For this same reason, we are told, people cling irrationally today to the concept of a divine being who will protect them from the perils of life, one to whom they can appeal when they are at their wits' end. They comfort themselves with false hopes because they have not the courage to face the responsibilities of life with their own hands and brains, and they look to a divine helper because they can neither win nor earn human aid.

We must freely admit that this picture is an accurate enough description of far too much of what goes by the name of religion. It is certainly true of the primitive that most his religious practices are concerned with the seeking of supernatural aid in the service of material needs. And in only lesser degree it is true of what we call the great ethical religions of civilized man; and even of the common thought and practice of Christianity. Abundant evidence of this utilitarian and even selfish motive is to be found in the familiar phenomena of the present day religious revival. One recent writer[2] has listed "the pieties of usefulness" which play a part in promoting the current wave of interest in religion as follows. 1. Patriotic piety, as manifested in recent legislation inserting the words "under God" in the oath of allegiance and adopting "in God we trust" as an official national motto, part of the motive being, undoubtedly, the promotion of patriotism by placing our nation in the pose of a defender of the faith. 2. Economic piety, which sees in religion a

2. Sydney Ahlstrom, *The Pieties of Usefulness.* (Stetson University Bulletin, De Land, Florida, 1957.)

means of support of the virtues that are useful in business and of the system of "free enterprise" against the threats of "creeping socialism" and "atheistic communism." 3. Social piety, which stresses the real values of the church as a social center where old and young can meet their friends, "make contacts with congenial people," "find their place in the community," practice the art of "making friends and influencing people," or help preserve a declining town or neighborhood from decay. In brief, the church is joined and promoted for these real but incidental values, which are by-products of its activities in the service of God. 4. The piety of "peace of mind," which peddles religiosity as a tranquilizing pill that enables restless and disturbed personalities to relax, to the content, to face life with confidence, to hide the causes of fear behind a curtain of "positive thinking," and to do all these things by persuading themselves that God exists to serve man instead of recognizing that the life of man only finds fulfillment in the service of God.

Wishful Thinking and Standing in Awe

We must admit, then, that at all times, ancient and modern, from the primitive to the contemporary religious revival, much of the motivation of religious practice, and a great deal of uncritical acceptance of religious belief, must be classified among what is thus aptly described as "the pieties of usefulness." This does not mean, however, that we must agree with Freud, that this is the only, or the most worthy, or the most basic, of religious motives, or that the very concept of a Supreme Being, of a Father in Heaven, is, from its inception, created and sustained by this sort of wishful thinking. Anthropologists have been critical of Freud's argument because so much of the most primitive religion does not present us with anthropomorphic gods that conform to the father image. We find totemic symbols and animal and nature deities that are devoid, or almost devoid, of personality, and the element of fear is far stronger in primitive religion than is reliance upon the god as a kindly protector. Even the goodness of the higher deities among primitives, and in early civilizations, is more prominently the goodness of the stern upholder of the moral law (such as it is recognized) than the goodness of a kindly and merciful benefactor such as is created by wishful thinking.

The most penetrating studies of primitive religions, such as those

of Malinowski and Marett, show a deep-lying ethical element in them as well as intangible fears and the pieties of usefulness due to belief in their magical efficacy in meeting material wants. Initiation ceremonies are primarily designed to make of the boy a "good man and true" according to the standards approved by the tribe, and those adjudged unworthy may be refused the rites. Many other ceremonies are felt by the participants as means of spiritual culture which "make everybody better," as Australian aboriginals have told the anthropological investigators. There is no doubt that primitive man hopes for material aid through the magical power of his observances, and that he develops through them a power of "positive thinking" which enables him to face life with more confidence; but genuine reverence and awe in the presence of something that is to him an embodiment and symbol of all that is noble and worthy is also a moving force and motive in his religious performance. His usual approach to his god, or to the performance of the cult, is not with confidence of favor and benefits, as to one thought of primarily as protector and benefactor, but with fear and trembling—and this lack of confidence is due, not to thought of his deity as evil and arbitrary, but to thought of himself as fallible and unworthy. The Freudian interpretation of primitive religion as basically a product of wishful thinking is therefore far wide of the mark. The pieties of usefulness are present at every stage of religious development, and they may often become the predominant motive in the religious activities of multitudes of people, but they are not the sole or basic motive of any religion, nor are they what gives vitality to any religious movement. Whether they are the predominant motive in the present return to religion time alone can tell. But time will tell, by demonstrating whether or not the movement has vitality enough to continue its growth. For the pieties of usefulness are doomed to eventual disappointment, and with disappointment they will lose their motive power.

We have argued that there is a genuinely ethical element in primitive religion by showing that its basic emotion in approach to the deity is not a confident expectation of benefactions but reverence, awe, and fear. It has little of the love of God and does not conceive its gods as predominantly gods of love. This may seem a strange way to defend a view of its basically ethical nature. But the point is that the element of fear in primitive, as in all religion, is due to the

worshiper's sense of sin. He approaches his god with fear as well as reverence because the deity embodies all that, for him, is virtuous and noble. Even in the cult of the Australian aboriginal, in which no deity or other spiritual being plays a part, this is so. The cult is itself the symbolic embodiment of the values he recognizes and is venerated as such. His religion is an idolatry of the cult. It is a devotion to the cult itself as the seat and source of mystical power embodying all that he recognizes as right and good. Of course, it also has its mundane utilities, but it is a power before which he humbles himself in reverential awe. It is an object recognized as *worthy* of devotion. This is the essence of the religious idea: the recognition of something as supremely worthy—worthy of devotion, of the commitment of one's whole self to it. And to *be* genuinely religious is to have this attitude—an attitude of devotion, of commitment of oneself to something beyond oneself that is held to be worthy of such commitment or devotion.

When we recognize this as the essential nature of the religious attitude we are led to wonder whether the pieties of usefulness, even the innocent and morally impeccable ones, can have any place in true religion. In their naked simplicity they appear as the very antithesis of the religious motive. Instead of committing man to the service of God they treat the service of God as a means to the promotion of human values. This is, indeed, the antithesis of the religious attitude; at least it is so in any other type of religion but that of humanism. Theistic religion, and, in particular, Christianity, recognize God as object of supreme value, and devotion to the fulfillment of his will as man's supreme duty. It does not resolve the dilemma to say that it is God's will that men should promote human values, for the question is—which is means and which is end? What is the true and proper motive of religion? Is it for God's sake to serve man—to fill human need because the human is a child of God, one whom God loves, and because we love God? Or is it for man's sake (including our own) to serve God—to do his will only because he wills what we want and by honoring him we hope to secure his aid? Certainly, for all theistic religion it is the former. The latter would be a humanistic idolatry with an element of supernaturalism in its beliefs.

To make the pieties of usefulness our ultimate motive is, then, idolatry or something worse, a superstitious egoism. But this does

not mean that they can have no place at all in true religion. It is true that genuine devotion to doing God's will because it *is* God's will does tend to promote all the worthy human values with which the pieties of usefulness are concerned. It promotes peace of mind and social values. It is right to make these values our ends and we may rejoice that true religion tends genuinely to promote them. What true religion requires is simply that they shall not be set up as ultimate and absolute values. Indeed to make them such is self-defeating. They tend to conflict and so cannot be all made absolute, and to make any one or a few absolute is bound to create occasions when injustice is done to others.

The Need of a God to Serve

It is here that we begin to see the true nature of man's need of God. We need to find God and give him his proper place in our lives, not that we may have God in various special ways to serve us, but because we need a God to serve. Without God in our lives, as object of supreme value to which we are committed, we have no objective standard of values; we must hesitate and hover inconsistently before a conflict of values, or we are thrust back upon self as supreme value, to try to serve our own desires. This casting of the self back upon its own desires as ultimate ground of choice will often be disastrous in its effect upon others, but it is always disastrous in its effect upon the self. Egoism is self-defeating. To realize its own potentialities the self must turn its interests outward, constructively, to society; it must be able to lose itself in its interest in the tasks it sees as useful in the world around it.

Turning from the individual to society we can see more clearly still man's need of God. The moral motives of man move upon three levels. First and lowest is the prudential, the motive of enlightened self-interest. It, however, does not always serve the cause of justice. Honesty is *usually* the best policy, but not always. For example, an employee may be threatened with dismissal from his job without a character and thrown hopelessly on a glutted labor market if he does not cooperate with the dishonest sales propaganda of his employer. Enlightened self-interest, or prudence, then counsels dishonesty. There are many such circumstances in which it is convenient not to have too sensitive a conscience. Where the group one belongs to is set on a course that is unjust to those outside the group

this is especially so. It requires moral courage of a high order to stand for justice and what one believes is right in the face of a community animated by racial prejudice, or war fever, or the passions of class conflict or industrial strife, or the terrorism of totalitarian governments. The motive of prudence, or enlightened self-interest, is, therefore, obviously not enough for the moral life of man, even though, at a lowly level, and in most circumstances, we may agree that prudence is a virtue.

The motives that enable a man to rise above the prudential level, and stand for justice and right to others even at personal risk or sacrifice to himself, are those of love (or disinterested good will) and loyalty, in which love is mingled with the pride of belonging in some way to the group or person to whom one is loyal. These motives of love and loyalty grow naturally in the interactions of face to face groups or any situation where communication and cooperation operate. We thus develop a love and loyalty to the family, the nation, the school, the church, the team, the club, the gang and to other distinctive groups to which we feel ourselves to belong, such as class, race and culture. We also develop specific loves and loyalties to particular individuals with whom we identify ourselves or have close and prized relations. These motives of love and loyalty may become very powerful drives, sometimes far stronger than unconditioned impulses and motives of self-interest. They are the source of man's capacity for self-sacrificing service of his fellows, for high courage in a worthy cause, for selfless devotion through the years, and for all that we recognize as most noble and admirable in human conduct.

But there is another side to love and loyalty. They have also, at times, a demonic character. All the groups to which we become attached with love and loyalty are divisions of humanity. A group involves a union of individuals but a separation from those in other groups. Love and loyalty to a group involve a concentration on the welfare of some but a corresponding lack of attention to that of those outside the group. Worse than that, human groups, as divisions of humanity, have developed antagonisms and rivalries with each other. They are in competition and conflict. Thus the very love and loyalty, which enables a man to rise above self-interest, work for the welfare of the group and stand for justice to all within it, are motives which often lead him to ignore the welfare of others

and join in imposing on others the unjust policies of his own group. Yet we have no higher motives than love and loyalty. And all our natural, human loves and loyalties are generated and conditioned by, and directed to, specific groups and individuals that divide humanity into sections that cultivate attitudes of indifference, if not of rivalry and hostility, to those outside them. Thus the best of the motives within us is a source of evil, and indeed of most of the worst of man's inhumanities to man. "If the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness!"

It is here that we see most clearly man's need of a God to serve. We need an object of love and loyalty, one that can *win* our love and loyalty, and, winning it, lift us above the love and loyalty to the particular human groups that divide us and pervert the best that is in us. Nothing can do this so effectively as the concept of a God of love who is equally the God and Father of us all and who equally loves us all. And no concept of God can win our love so powerfully as that of the God who came seeking us in love in the person of a man, born in humility, living the common life of his fellows, devoting himself to the doing of good, and dying in sacrificial loyalty to the truth he came to proclaim and for the sake of those he came to tell of the God who loves them.

"Not that we loved God, but that God first loved us." It is the God who loves us that wins our love through the preaching of the Word. It is his creation of love in us by the Word that is thus revealed to us that heals the lesions in our souls, the lesions between love of self and love of our fellows, and between love of some and indifference or hatred to others. It is this same thought of the God of universal love, as revealed in the Word we find in the gospel, that is so much needed to heal the lesions in society, that divide race against race, class against class, nation against nation, and threaten us with the doom of our vaunted civilization. Again we say, Man's great need is that of a God to serve, a God that can *win* his love, drawing him out of himself and lifting him above the petty loves and loyalties by which society is divided and threatened.

In speaking thus of man's *need* of God are we returning again to the pieties of usefulness and saying that man should turn to the service of God because it will heal the inward distresses of his personality and the threatening disorders of his society? No. For we are not presenting these as the motives, ends or reasons why man

should turn to the service of God—serving God for pay in the form of a healthy mind in a peaceful and prosperous society. If that were the *motive* it would not work. What man needs is to *love* God, and one cannot love anything for the sake of the effect of that love on oneself, for that is to love, primarily, not the other, but oneself. The most that one can do to promote the love of God or man in oneself is to inhibit the motives that run counter to that love. This one must do. And it is the reason why it is right that there should be *commandments* to love God and our neighbors. We can do something to control and inhibit the motive forces that tend to smother and crush the spontaneous impulse that arises in us to love God and our neighbors. But that impulse is not an expression of our deliberate will. Will is deliberate attention to something, or the deliberate doing of something, for the sake of some further end beyond it. It is not by our own will that we love God or man; our will can only serve to control our own resistance to the love that God and man, as we think of them, call forth from us. This is the meaning of the truth that we are saved, not of ourselves, but by the grace of God (the spontaneous capacity for love) that is in us, and by the power of the Word that is revealed to us. As the thought of God is presented to us the spirit of God, the spontaneous impulse of life in its creative expression, responds within us, if not inhibited by the power of sin, the set tendencies to self and narrow loyalties and affections.

The human spirit is made whole, then, not by its own will and its own seeking of wholeness, but by a spontaneous response of love which is called forth from it by the thought of God. The pieties of usefulness are expressions of the love of self, not of God, and can therefore bring no healing of the deepest lesion of the spirit, which is caused by the love of self. Why then do we urge the fact that man has need of God, that true religion, the love of God, meets the deepest need of the individual and the greatest need of society? The answer is: Not to present a *motive* for religion, but an *ethical justification* of it. Secularism presents an *ethical* challenge to religion. It urges that man's duty is to love his fellowmen and that it is both unnecessary and harmful to hold by faith to the idea of God and cultivate a prior love to him. We are told that such a faith and allegedly higher love can only turn man's thoughts to other-worldly ends, interpose a distraction from love and service to our fellow

men, and perhaps create a fanaticism that may lead us to be unjust to multitudes of our fellows who do not have the same faith. This challenge must be met, for we must admit the possibility that faith may be mistaken and religion may be evil, an idolatry that is worse than no religion at all. The ethical justification of a religious faith must therefore show that it *results* in the better service of man even though it does not make the service of man its primary goal, that it helps man to rise to the height of his moral potentialities and is, indeed, essential to a making the most of these, even though moral self-realization or perfection is not the goal at which it aims. This ethical justification of religion, as it takes form in the Christian faith, we have provided by showing the reality of man's need of God—of a God who can win his love.

We see, then, that the true motive of a turning, or of a return, to religion is the love of God, and that man cannot love God of his own will but that his love must be won by God. We have seen, too, that Christianity tells us of a God who comes seeking us in love, manifesting the true nature of his being in the person of Christ, and that "the love of Christ constraineth us" to love him too. We saw, also, that, though we cannot produce love of our own will, yet Christianity teaches that we are *commanded* to love God and man, and the explanation of this apparent anomaly we saw in the fact that, though we cannot of our own will create in ourselves a love of God or man, yet we can, of our own will, stifle or inhibit the spontaneous love that (as Christians we believe) God creates in us and the Word of the gospel calls forth from us and turns toward God. On the other hand we also can, of our own will, inhibit and control the selfish and partial will and impulse that would otherwise inhibit and stifle the love that God creates in us and Christ calls forth from us. To sum our conclusions thus far then: the motive of a true return to religion must be the love of God; in the Christian belief this is a love of which God makes us capable, which is called forth by the gospel of Christ, but which our will can resist and stifle.

God and the Moral Law

Our next question is how man comes by the idea of a God to love? It is not sufficient to say that we learn it from the bible, for the idea is much older than the bible and widely held independently of acceptance of the bible. We have already seen that, in primitive

religion, a god or cult is held in awe and reverence, as embodiment of all that is conceived as noble and worthy, and is usually approached with fear because the worshiper is acutely aware of his own fallibility and unworthiness. Thus, even to the primitive, his religion, as Immanuel Kant says, embodies a conception of the moral law as divine command. Indeed, the one concept which seems to be common to religion in all its various forms (except, perhaps, humanism) is that there is a power, beyond the ordinary human agencies, that somehow requires of man that he do what is right. The concept of righteousness varies enormously; the power that makes for righteousness may be conceived as single or plural, as personal or impersonal; it may be so vaguely conceived that the concept in some cases seems to be only implicit in the cult rather than explicitly thought and taught, but always at the center of a religious tradition we find the assumption that the ethical requirement is rooted in something more than the rules of the social order, and this ultimate source and sanction of the moral law is in some way made the center of religious devotion. In the Old Testament this conception is very explicit. God is, above all else, the author of the moral law. In Christianity, where the law is conceived as basically the law of love, the righteousness of God implies his love toward all mankind and his will that men should love one another.

The basic proposition of theism is therefore a proposition, not about the origin of the universe, but about the moral law, that it is the will and purpose of a superhuman power. Christianity further affirms that this power is related to us as a Father, and to the universe as creator, and that his will is love. But these are further developments of the basic concept. The question as to how man comes by the idea of God is therefore, primarily, the question as to how he comes to conceive the moral law as a divine command; and the answer to this question must be found in the moral experience.

At this point John Baillie is probably the most illuminating of contemporary theologians. In *The Interpretation of Religion*[3] he argues, clearly and cogently, that the objectivity of the moral experience is the root of faith. The objectivity of the moral law discloses itself to us when we ask ourselves "Why ought I to do what I believe I ought to do?" It does not suffice to answer "Because it

3. New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928.

is in my interest to act in this way," for the moral demand we experience within us is a demand that we do this which we believe is right whether or not it is in our interest—in the long run or the short run—to do it; and most often the demand of the moral conscience is to do something we believe is *not* in our own personal interests. The alternative answer which attributes the moral law to society, is no more satisfactory. "Why should I do what I believe I ought to do?" To say, "Because society demands it" does not suffice because we recognize that we can always question what society demands of us, asking whether it is *really* right, and sometimes the answer is "No." It is especially in these cases where the critical conscience of the moral thinker has led him to believe that the social judgment, or traditional moral rule, is wrong, and that he must resist its pressures, that the sense of duty impresses itself as a demand of a higher power, above human authority. It is these experiences that have led the prophets to go out and preach their distinctive ethical insight, saying "Thus saith the Lord." It is because the moral experience, the sense of duty, when we reflect upon it, makes its demands within us with the voice of authority, "This thou shalt do," "That thou shalt not do," and an authority that is above that of kings and governments, that man in such moments is impressed with the conviction that he is face to face with a Will that is other and higher than his own, other and higher than any human will that may oppose it, a Will that speaks with authority to the wills of all men and rightfully demands that they obey.

Even the experience that consciences differ, and that conscience may be mistaken, does not refute the conviction that it somehow involves a demand from a higher power. For the requirement of conscience is not that we do, without thinking, what we have been told or have always believed to be right, but that we *think for ourselves* about what is right, make up our own minds, and act in accord with our convictions. The moral experience is not the experience of being inerrantly guided as to what is right and then required to do it. It is the experience of being *required to think* about other people and our duty to them, and *required to do* what, after consideration, we are convinced is right. This central and fundamental aspect of conscience is ignored by those who tell us that it is merely a subconsciously determined after effect of social conditioning in childhood. These processes of conditioning set up for us a set of ready-

made judgments as to what is right and wrong, and attach emotions of approval and disapproval to these judgments. Conscientious convictions, thus framed, may, of course, often be mistaken. But the blind following of these emotionally colored convictions is only a superficial phase of the moral experience. It is not the whole, and not the most fundamental phase of conscientiousness. To be genuinely conscientious is to recognize the duty to *think,* and fearlessly enquire, into what is really our duty, and then to do it. It is the moral consciousness in this form that forces upon us the conviction of the objective validity of the moral laws at which our thought arrives. It is in this experience that the sense of duty impresses us as the demand of an other and higher Will within us—a Will that faces and opposes our own in the depths of our being. It is here that we have that personal encounter with that Other whom, if we make our surrender to him, we call "God."

At this point the Kantian philosophy of religion and contemporary existential theology are in agreement. Faith arises in an experience akin to that of personal encounter, an I-Thou relationship. The Existentialist theologians emphasize the personal nature of this experience; Kant emphasizes its moral nature. It is the moral element that is of prime importance, for a personal encounter that was non-moral would not be religious, while a commitment to an objective moral power would still be religious, even if, as in early Buddhism, that power was interpreted as impersonal; though it would not then be a theistic religion. For theism God must be both moral and personal.

Kant's understanding of religion is therefore correct for theism. It is the interpretation of the moral law as divine command; and this interpretation arises, as John Baillie says, from the sense of personal constraint experienced as we face the objective requirements of the moral law. An affirmation of the existence of God, as moral and personal being, is therefore not primarily a proposition about the origin of the universe but about the moral law—that it is the will of God, the will of a personal being who is supremely worthy of our devotion.

Kant's moralistic interpretation of religion has often been felt as unsatisfactory because associated with his unsatisfactory view of the nature of the moral demand and moral motivation. It certainly must be freed from these associations. For Kant the moral motive

was simply respect for the moral law as a law arising from one's own nature as a rational being. The doing of one's duty is only moral when done for duty's sake. Man's sole moral capacity is to act from respect for the moral law. In so acting man is free. For the rest he is a slave to his inclinations, or desires, which are always concerned with his own pleasure. Kant did not recognize the possibility of disinterested good will. For him all man's deliberate actions are self-regarding, pleasure-seeking, except the will to act in accord with universal principles, to obey the categorical imperative. There is thus no room in his theory of motivation for a genuine love of God or man. The moral demand is not really a demand that we should love our fellow men, for we are incapable of it. It is only a demand that we do our duty—and this, Kant believes, will require us to do unto others the sort of thing that we would do *if* we loved them, as we do love ourselves.

Now it is true that we cannot create love in ourselves by act of will, but it is not true that we have no tendency to love other human beings for their own sakes—disinterestedly. The command to love must be understood, as we have already noted, as a command to control those impulses which would inhibit love, and so give it free play. Similarly the command to love God must be interpreted as a command to control and inhibit those impulses and desires which would tend to stifle or inhibit the love of God. The love of God must be recognized as arising spontaneously within us, not necessarily (as in Augustinian, Thomistic, and Calvinistic theology) by a special infusion of divine grace, but because God made us for himself and our souls are restless till they find rest (or rather, find their true and full expression) in love toward him. On this view it is true that God creates us, and creates in us the impulse to love himself. But it is also true that our self-will and prejudices can stifle that impulse. What is required is a deliberate act of self-control, which is a *surrender* of this self-will, so that the impulse of love to God and man, which God created in us, can have free play in our lives.

The moral demand that theistic religion interprets as the will of God is, therefore, not a requirement simply to respect the law as law, but a requirement to surrender our self-will so as to give free play to the natural impulses of good will to men. This demand for surrender of self-will our ego resents and we resist. This is the conflict within the soul in which the flesh and the pride of life lust

against the spirit of love which God has created in us, creating us thus in his own image. The surrender to God which is the conversion of the soul, the turning or return to religion, is the recognition, by faith, of this demand for surrender of self-will as a demand of an other and higher Will, supremely worthy of devotion; and it is a response of love, devotion, adoration, to this Other who thus confronts us and demands our surrender. Thus is the love of God born in man, and this is the only motive of a true turning, or return, to religion.

Fear, Love and the Roots of Faith

Is the present new wave of interest in religion a genuine return to religion? Is it an expression of the love of God? Only God, who looketh on the heart, can really know, though perhaps, in due course, by its fruits, we can tell. Undoubtedly, the motives of the new interest in religion are mixed. But in that its fruits, thus far, are largely good we have reason to hope that there is being manifested, not merely a new interest in God, but a new love of God. If so, we may ask what influences have been operative to stimulate a wide-spread surrender of that self-will which otherwise stifles the love of our fellow men, blinds us to the moral demand through which we find God confronting us, and sets us in rebellion against him?

In answer to this question there has been a widespread tendency to point to the troubles of our present age as creating fear and uncertainty, distrust of human aims and leadership, a sense of failure, widespread want and despair. These motives, I believe, account for the growth of the pieties of usefulness, looking to religion to supply what man has failed to supply for himself. They also, I believe, explain the reaction to conservatism in theology, for a loss of faith in one's fellow men tends to induce in believing minds an emphasis on man's sinfulness and corruption and an emphasis on the transcendent otherness of the divine. But these motives do not explain a genuine rise of faith in God and love of God, if such there be. If these are the only influences affecting the new interest in religion then there is reason to fear that this new interest is neither genuine nor wholesome.

There are, however, other influences which we can see at work, having a very different effect. The whole economic and political his-

tory of the twentieth century has been such as to drive home the truth that no man liveth to himself—indeed that no community and no nation liveth to itself. We have been forced, as never before, to recognize our mutual interdependence. This is a shock to the self-will and isolationism of individuals as well as nations. Human beings have been forced to think of each other, to realize how much they depend on each other, and thus to grow interested in each other, interested in the welfare of the other person. In this way isolated self-interest has been beaten down and good-will given free play. Thus influenced, men become more sensitive to the moral demand, more ready to see in it the will of God, and to respond in love to the love of God which they thus find seeking them.

One other factor, also present in the contemporary situation, should be mentioned as helpful in promoting a genuine return to religion. It is the very opposite of the fear and want that motivate the pieties of usefulness. In America today most individuals probably have a greater sense of personal security and prosperity than at any previous time in history. Too often we think of the effect of these material advantages as making people forget their need of God. It is true that they must tend to lessen the sense of need of the sort that promotes the pieties of usefulness. But these needs are not such as to weaken the self-will that closes the heart to the love of God; they rather stimulate it. Insecurity and hunger make men think, first and foremost, of their material needs, and make them think that security and prosperity are all they need. But in times of security and prosperity man discovers that his heart is still not content. He has leisure to consider the status of those around him, and his pride may lead him restlessly to desire more goods to add to his status; yet he finds no final satisfaction that way. Relieved of the pressure of material wants himself he gives more thought to the needs of others, not only to their material needs, but to what he sees of the deeper hunger of their hearts—a hunger for more satisfying human relations and for a vision that can give fuller meaning and significance to life. Indeed, having an abundance of bread—and circuses—he begins to discover that man cannot live by bread alone, nor by bread and circuses. Thus he begins to discover the deeper need of the human spirit, a need not satisfied by the abundance of material goods, his need of God, and this, not of a God to

serve his needs, for he has abundance, but his need of a God to serve.

These are the two great discoveries that lead to a genuine return to religion. The discovery that no man liveth to himself, which leads him to the love of his fellow men; and the discovery that man cannot live by bread alone, which sends him in search of the Word of God, the ultimate meaning and purpose of life, and leads him to the love of God. Once we realize that these are the ways through which men find God, rather than through physical want and fear, we can also see that there is no incompatibility between the service of man's material needs and the service of God; but to create peace on earth and an abundance of the good things of life is also to create the conditions in which God can best seek man, and man can most readily find God. The social gospel is not the whole of God's Word to man, but it is a central and essential part, for in both the preaching of it and in the attainment of its ends it creates the conditions in which the gospel that saves souls can be most clearly heard and can most strongly exert its power. If there is today, in America, a genuine return to religion, it is not because there is, in the pulpit, a return to emphasis on the gospel of individual salvation, but because a generation ago the social gospel was preached and is, today, to some extent being practiced.

CHAPTER II

The Return to Reason: Neo-Thomism

IN PHILOSOPHY the predominant tone of the twentieth century has been anti-rationalistic. The Idealistic construction of the 19th. century broke down in the first two decades of the present century under the attacks of Neo-Realism and Pragmatism. In the last three decades the modest attempts of Realists at an empirical reconstruction have been almost swamped under by waves of Pragmatism, Positivism and Existentialism, denying the possibility of any factual knowledge beyond that of scientifically established probabilities concerning the relations of sensory objects. Nevertheless, in this same philosophically hectic twentieth century, there has been a significant movement seeking to restate and restore the imposing philosophical edifice of the Middle Ages. This has occurred mainly as a recovery of intellectual strength and confidence within Catholicism, but it has also appealed to many non-Catholics as a way to implement and support the return to religion. It is, however, a gift-horse of ancient lineage which we would do well to look very carefully in the mouth. A faith that makes use of it is in danger of riding for a fall.

THE COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

To examine the Thomistic arguments in modern dress we select a presentation of them by Jacques Maritain which is as careful and subtle as it is brief and clear.[1] Maritain begins by pointing out that, at the threshold of philosophy, there is a deep cleavage between Thomism and all the typical modern systems of thought, including Skepticism, Nominalism, Empiricism, Kantianism, Idealism, Pragmatism, Positivism, Dialectical Materialism and Existentialism. The

1. Jacques Maritain, *Approaches to God* (Harper and Brothers: New York, 1954), pp. 16-ff. Numbers in parentheses in the following discussion refer to pages in this book.

moderns reject certain "primordial truths" (p. 17) which, says Maritain, "the philosopher ought to know" (p. 19) in order to be in a position to grasp the demonstrative value of the proofs of God's existence. The first of these "truths" is that the intellect presses beyond the sensible appearances of things to seek their Being, and that the being of things is to some degree intelligible or attainable by the intellect. Second, that the being of things differs in different kinds of things, but is grasped in the same concept of Being, and that this concept, taken from our knowledge of particular things, can be applied to concepts that transcend them, making possible a "knowledge by analogy" (p. 20) of a realm of things invisible. Thirdly, that the "laws of being," as found in particular things, apply to the whole extent of being, and that the principle of causality, as one of these laws, thus reaches beyond particular things to that form of Being known only by analogy. Fourthly, that the principle of causality is known "by an immediate intellectual intuition" (p. 21) and may be stated as the requirement that there must be an intelligible reason for the existence of everything; i.e., it must either have the intelligible reason for its existence in its determination by some other thing, or it must have "in itself the whole reason of its intelligibility" (p. 21).

Applying these principles, the Scholastic philosopher proceeds to argue that the existence of a world of particular things implies as its intelligible reason, ground, or cause, the existence of a Being on which the existence of the world depends, a Being that can be the intelligible explanataion or reason for all else that exists and which yet contains in itself the reason for its own existence and so requires nothing beyond itself to explain its existence. To constitute an intelligible reason for all temporal existence it must itself be beyond time, but its nature must be such that, could we understand it, we would see that the whole course of temporal existence logically and necessarily follows from it. This eternal First Cause, creator and sustainer of the universe, which is logically required by the fact of our existence interpreted in the light of these "primordial truths," is God.

It should be noted that the argument, thus stated, is free from certain superficial objections commonly made to it. It does not involve itself in an infinite regress requiring that if we pass from the world to God, as its cause, then we must pass on to the cause of the

existence of God, and so on; for what it maintains is required by reason is the *"intelligible* cause," the complete logical explanation, and this requires the concept of some form of Being which does not, in turn, require an explanation in something beyond itself. Nor does the argument commit the fallacy of composition, arguing that, since all things in the universe require for their explanation that they should be necessitated by antecedent conditions, therefore the world as a whole must be so necessitated. This would be fallacious, for one cannot argue that, because something is true of all the parts in a whole, therefore it is true of the whole, as a whole. But Maritain's statement of the argument carefully avoids this by insisting that what requires explanation is not the succession of one form of existence upon another, but the existence of anything at all, and that this requires the concept of a form of Being analogous to particulars in that it exists, but unlike them in that it always exists and exists by necessity of its own nature and not by necessity of something external to it.

A third type of objection Maritain sets aside by use of this same conception of that the existence of which is "necessary through itself" (p. 46). It may be argued that there is no logical necessity for time and the series of events that constitute our universe to have had a beginning. This Maritain cheerfully admits, pointing out that St. Thomas also said that the truth that the world has a beginning and an end is known only by revelation, not by reason. Matter, therefore, *may* be eternal, and undergo ceaseless change in accord with natural laws. But, Maritain argues, such matter must still depend for its existence upon another form of Being beyond it. For if this matter exists always it must exist *necessarily;* it must therefore either exist by necessity of something else, or it must be necessary through itself. But it cannot be necessary through itself for it is subject to change, and "what is necessary *in essence* [or in its own nature] excludes every kind of contingency and change" (p. 46) since, by definition, it is, in its whole nature or essence, necessary. Therefore the material universe, even if it had no beginning, nevertheless depends for its existence on the creative and sustaining act of a Being whose very nature, or essence, includes existence, and who is thus the ultimate Cause of all that is.

At this point we see that the crux of the argument lies in this concept of a form of Being whose very nature necessitates his own existence, whose *essence* is his *existence*. It is because of this that Immanuel Kant argued that the Cosmological Argument (from the alleged necessity of a First Cause) depends upon the Ontological Argument—from the idea of a Being the very conception of which involves its existence. The Ontological Argument is admittedly fallacious in that, starting with a mere abstract concept, it draws a conclusion asserting *actual* existence, not merely the concept of existence. Against Kant Scholastics object that their argument starts with the fact of actual existence of particular things and argues that this requires for its explanation another form of existence, infinite and eternal. In comment on this dispute we may agree that Kant has misstated the objection to the concept of a Being whose essence involves existence. It nevertheless is true that this concept is vital to the argument and is open to criticism as arbitrary and even self-contradictory. It is at this point that we must press the attack.

The alternatives are (a) the concept of the universe as continuous process, without beginning or end, and dependent on nothing beyond itself, and (b) the concept of immutable and absolute Being from whose act the universe as dependent process necessarily follows. The former alternative is rejected on the ground that if the universe exists always it exists by necessity (p. 45) and what undergoes change cannot be necessary in essence (p. 46) and so must depend for its existence on something beyond it. The argument thus runs:

1. Things exist. Therefore something must have always existed, or existence began from nothing.
2. What has always existed exists necessarily.
3. What exists necessarily is either necessary by reason of some other thing, or necessary by reason of its own nature or essence.
4. What is necessary by reason of its own nature cannot change, for its nature or essence makes its whole being necessary and therefore present at all times.
5. The universe as a continuous process cannot be necessary in essence, even if it has always existed, since it is subject to change. It must therefore be necessary by reason of something else.
6. That by reason of which the universe as a whole exists (including all time) must have always existed, and therefore exists of necessity; but since it exists beyond time, and all else is dependent upon it, it cannot be contingent upon any other thing; it must there-

fore be necessary by reason of its own nature or essence and not subject to change.

The Ambiguity of "Necessary Being"

If we agree in rejecting the possibility that existence began from nothing then the acceptance or rejection of this argument will depend on the interpretation of the concept of necessity which occurs throughout and on which the crucial propositions, numbers 2, 3 and 4, logically depend. In ordinary discourse we use the concept of necessity in two connections, (a) as logical necessity—the relation of a conclusion to its premises, (b) as practical necessity—the relation in which a person or thing is said to stand toward the conditions which make it a practical impossibility for it, or him, to be or do anything else. Is it in either of these senses that the notion of necessity is used in the Thomistic argument?

The second proposition, that what has always existed exists necessarily, is intelligible if the sense intended is that of practical necessity; if something has always existed this indicates that some conditions hitherto have made it a practical impossibility for it *not* to exist. But this does not guarantee that it always will continue to exist. Further, this concept of necessity—the relation between a thing and the conditions of its existence—is not applicable to a thing existing independently of any conditions. It cannot be this sense of necessity therefore that is used in the 3rd. proposition, that what exists necessarily is either necessary by reason of itself or necessary by reason of some other thing. "Necessity," in the practical sense, which may obtain between things, is the name of a relation between particular occurrences, and it is nonsense to say of any existent, even one that exists always, that it has this sort of relation to itself. This means that the concept of necessity as used in the second proposition (a concept applicable to actual existences) is not the same concept as that used in the third proposition, in which we are presented with the logical alternatives that what is necessary is either necessary by reason of itself, or by reason of some other thing. This change in the concept constitutes a fallacy of ambiguous middle term which breaks the logical continuity of the argument. It also breaks the connection of the argument with its starting point in assertions concerning actual existence.

We may pursue the question further as to what is the sense of

"necessity" in the third and fourth propositions. It would appear here to mean logical necessity. But "logical necessity" is the name of a relation that subsists only between *meanings,* i.e., between the meaning of certain concepts or propositions and the meaning of further concepts or propositions derived from them. The claim is that the concept of "necessary existence" can be analyzed into two alternative modes of necessary existence (a) necessary by reason of itself, (b) necessary by reason of something else. The latter is a legitimate interpretation if the "something else" is a proposition stating the properties of some actual existent, for from such statements we can frequently derive, by logical necessity, further statements concerning the existence of something else. The trouble is with the first alternative—the claim that the existence of something may, in the sense of "logically necessary," be said to be "necessary through itself," or "necessary by reason of its own essence or nature." If a conclusion as to the existence of anything is to be made logically necessary by statements about its essence or nature then those statements must already include statements asserting its existence. This is the only sense in which the existence of anything could be rendered logically necessary "by reason of itself, of its essence or nature." But this is to have already begged the question of the existence of the thing. If, on the other hand, an analysis of the essential properties or nature of a thing is said to imply, by logical necessity, its existence, this is to fall back on the Ontological Argument, and Kant's refutation of the argument from the alleged necessity of a First Cause is sound.

When, however, it is insisted, as Scholastics do insist, that the argument begins from the fact of existence of things and the sort of necessity that can be attributed to the existence of things, it appears that its fallacy consists in the confusion of this sort of necessity with logical necessity, so that the necessity by which things may be said to exist (and especially whatever it is that may be said to exist always) is allowed to take over features of logical necessity, the relation between meanings, which subsists timelessly and which may hold between the constituent elements of any complex concept.

This transformation which comes over the concept of "necessary existence" (as we pass from the existence of particular things to the concept of a First Cause on which they all depend) is rendered tolerable to the Scholastic mind by the doctrine of analogy, to which

we have already referred. This doctrine argues that, though no term derived from the temporal particulars of our world can be applied, in the same sense, to a Being that is infinite, transcendent and eternal, yet certain appropriate terms, such as power, intelligence and goodness, which we derive from observation of effects produced by this Being, may, in a changed sense called "analogical," be attributed to Him. The transcendent First Cause may thus, in this analogous sense, be called personal, though personality in Him must be different from, and infinitely superior to, personality in us. In the same way, the Scholastic philosopher feels, it is legitimate to think of "necessary existence" as applied to God, as meaning something different from the sense in which it is applied to things. However, even if we accept this doctrine of analogy, it means that the meaning of a concept, as applicable to an eternal and transcendent being, is not precisely known to us, and so no conclusions can be drawn from it, as is done when it is argued that whatever is necessary in essence cannot, by definition, be subject to change. Indeed the procedure of the whole argument, as we have observed, makes a series of illegitimate transitions. It passes from a practical necessity in the relations of things to a demand for logical necessity and completeness in the causal explanation of existence, and then to the concept of a Being who meets this demand by having a unique sort of necessary existence as a character of his own nature; and it arbitrarily rules out the explanation in terms of continuous process without beginning or end because this concept is incompatible with the concept of necessary existence created and required by its own confusion of thought.

The Basic Assumptions of Scholasticism

These criticisms apply to the way the argument is worked out to its conclusions. Still further criticisms apply to its basic assumptions —those alleged "primordial truths" which Maritain says "a philosopher ought to know so as to be in a condition to grasp on the level of critical reflection the demonstrative value of the philosophical proofs of God's existence" (p. 19). These alleged "truths" are products of confused thinking which are, as Maritain says, rejected by all the most significant schools of thought that have arisen since the Middle Ages. Take first the assertion that what the intellect, as distinct from sensation, seeks and finds in things is their Being. As

against this Empiricists contend that what the intellect does is to seek the relations between the particular data of experience and to fit these data theoretically into a postulated, structured process which explains their continuity and order in such a way that we can to some extent predict and control them. The notion of Being, as distinct from the data by which we know or assume the structure and process which constitute things, is the hypostatization of an abstraction, the erection into a distinct entity of an abstract concept derived from language. First the "it" or "thing" which we say has properties (for example, "It is round, hard, black and swiftly moving") is hypostatized in the notion of "substance," and then, since both things and their properties or attributes are said to exist, the further abstract notion of "being" is created and given status as a transcendental reality. For empirical philosophy, and for scientific thought, however, a statement about a "thing" is not about a "being" or "substance," as distinct from the properties given in experience, but about the actual and probable course of experience and the structured world process of which it appears to be a part.

Even if we were to accept this first assumption of Scholasticism —the concepts of "being" and "substance" attainable only by the intellect and not by sense—we should still have to object to the second and third, i.e., to the concept of a form of Being distinct from that of particular things but conceivable by analogy and known by logical demonstration. For particular things and even for the universe as a whole to be in the sense of "to exist" is to *endure through time*. The different parts of the verb "to be," ("was," "is," "will be") refer to differences of time, past, present, and future. It makes nonsense of the verb "to be," and of its present participle, "being," to make it refer to the non-temporal. "Enduring through time" and "being non-temporal" are not "analogous" concepts but contradictory concepts. The word "being" in the latter ("being non-temporal") is not the "is" of existence (as in "there is a man"), but the "is" of predication—as in "The man is tall." And the "is" of predication is a word that does not *refer* to anything. It merely performs the linguistic function of a logical connective between subject and predicate. It is true that we speak of non-temporal "entities" such as "facts" and "concepts," e.g., numbers. But these are abstractions from concrete existence which have existence only as subjects or predicates in our thought. By a combination of abstrac-

tions we can construct concepts which are self-contradictory, such as round squares, and it is to this class of "entity" that the concept of a Being, in the sense of "existence," which is non-temporal, belongs. That which is eternal (i.e. non-temporal) cannot be said to exist, even in an "analogical" sense of the term.

If, therefore, we say that God is eternal, beyond time, we cannot say that God exists. Neither can we attribute to God any other characteristics that belong to existent things, such as personality, power, intelligence, goodness, love. We cannot do this even in an analogical sense, for these concepts all have the meaning of something existing, enduring through time, and so would contradict the concept of God to which they are attached; and analogy, though it must accept difference cannot tolerate sheer contradiction. The whole Scholastic concept of God as an existence beyond time must therefore be dropped, and with it the whole structure of analogical predicates applied to such a God. We must either adopt the concept of a God who really exists, endures through time, and to whom predicates can be applied in an univocal sense, or we must reject the concept of a God who is in any sense a supreme being as logically self-contradictory.

Rationalism and the Problem of Evil

Thus far we have merely been concerned to show that the Thomistic proofs of the existence of God, even as revised by such a distinguished Neo-Scholastic as Maritain, constitute a logical *non-sequitur*. This, however, is not their worst feature. This method of proving the existence of God, if accepted, has consequences for religion which are positively evil. This is the most important reason why it should be avoided. These bad consequences we must now proceed to show.

The first of these is that its logic, if sound, would make God supremely evil as well as supremely good. This follows from the fourth of St. Thomas's five arguments for God's existence—which is a part of the whole argument without which there would be no reason to call the First Cause "God." This fourth argument claims that whatever positive character exists in the world in varying degrees must exist in supreme degree, though in some more eminent way, in the First Cause; thus the First Cause must possess in supreme degree "goodness, beauty, life, knowledge, love and every

other perfection." The idea that these characteristics of particular things may grow by their own activity from small beginnings is rejected as not satisfying the requirement of an "intelligible cause" or rational explanation of their existence, since the greater is not logically deducible from the less. It is argued, therefore, that God must possess in supreme degree properties analogous to all positive properties that appear in the universe he has caused to be. Negative properties, of course, being the mere absence or incompleteness of something, may appear at any time in the history of the universe, since, as a temporal process, it is never complete; but these imperfections cannot be attributed to the First Cause, which is eternally complete.

To avoid the charge that this argument would imply that God is supremely evil as well as supremely good it is argued that evil is merely a negative property, an imperfection in the sense of an incompleteness which is inevitable in any finite time. This way of escape, however, is certainly a falsification of experience. Pain is not merely the absence of comfort or pleasure, but a positive element of experience; and it is evil in the same sense as pleasure is good. And the will to produce undeserved pain, motivated by spite or revenge, is as positive a psychological process as the will to produce deserved happiness, motivated by love or sympathy; and the former is evil in the same sense as the latter is good. If therefore, the Scholastic argument for the existence and character of God is logically sound then God must possess in supreme degree a character analogous to evil as well as good. Such a God could not be an object worthy of man's trust and devotion.

The Life of Faith and the Open Question

A further objectionable feature of the Scholastic claim to proofs of God's existence is the effect it must have on the higher development of the moral and religious life, as a life of love and faith. In so far as it is relied upon as intellectually sound, and given the attention it then would merit, it makes faith not merely unnecessary, but psychologically impossible. Reason thrusts it out of its place in the mind. A person who can follow the Euclidean proofs does not need faith to believe that the interior angles of a triangle are together equal to two right-angles. If he accepts the proofs as logically sound it is nonsense to say that he believes the conclusion as an act of

faith. Similarly, if one holds the Scholastic proofs of the existence of God to be sound it is nonsense to say that one believes in God by faith. But to walk in the service of God by faith and faith alone is a nobler way of life than to walk in His service by what is assumed to be assured knowledge, or sight. But this nobler way of life would become impossible for all those who understand the proofs—if the proofs are logically sound.

There is, as Immanuel Kant clearly pointed out,[2] a good reason why God leaves us to walk by faith and not by sight. If we were able to know for certain the existence of a God of supreme justice, whether the knowledge was obtained by logical demonstration or by some indubitable revelation, then to do the will of such a God would be a matter of elementary prudence. The person in whom the motive of self-interest was strongest would render the most complete obedience. The highest form of courage would be no higher than that required to endure pain for a time in order to avoid a much greater suffering or loss in the future. Love would be able to make no real sacrifices, for in every act of righteous love we would know that we were serving our own true well-being in the long run. Even a thief usually refrains from stealing while the policeman is looking, but this is not great virtue. To refrain from wrongdoing because of certain knowledge that an eternal and supremely just policeman was always looking would be no higher virtue. The possibility of development of a personality that rises above mere prudence, to do justice for justice sake and to be ready to sacrifice self for love of one's fellows, therefore requires that God shall hide his face from us. We must be left to walk by faith—believing, though we know we have no proof.

To believe, though we know we cannot prove, is not to be unfaithful to our own intelligence. As William James showed in his famous essay on *The Will to Believe,* where the evidences from logic and experience leave a question intellectually open it is not always reasonable to try to maintain an open mind. If one of the answers, which logically is at least as reasonable as any alternative, is such that to believe it would challenge and inspire us to a nobler way of life than the others then it is both reasonable and right to

2. *Critique of Practical Reason,* Trans. by T. K. Abbott (London: Longmans, Green & Co., Sixth ed., 1909), pp. 244-246.

hope that it is true and to decide to act as though it is true. To make this decision is the choice of the life of faith. And living the life of faith turns the hope into an inward conviction—a conviction based, not on objective evidence, but on subjective experience that harmonizes with the expectations that faith arouses.

What has been said above about the effect of a belief in God based on objective evidence—that it would reduce the moral life to elementary prudence—may raise the question as to whether a belief, held with sufficient certainty, though arising from the will to believe and a subjective experience in which the expectations of faith are fulfilled, may not have the same effect. Practical experience, however, shows that this is not the case, and reflection shows the reason why. The will to believe is, from the first, an expression of motives that are higher than prudence or self-interest, i.e., the love of justice and concern for human well-being. The expectations of faith are confirmed only so far as the response of the spirit is in accord with the demand that faith makes; so confirmation of faith is only maintained so far as the moral life is maintained above the level of self-interest. When self-interest momentarily comes to the fore faith wavers. The salutary effect of faith in the moral life is wrought, not by satisfying the demand of self-interest, but by inspiring the love, loyalty and devotion which thrust self-interest into the background, and keeping down the fears that tend to thrust it into the fore.

The Life of Love and the Virtue of Prudence

Catholic theology has never been concerned about the effect on the spiritual values of faith and love wrought by claims to possess objective proofs of the existence of God. And for this there is a reason. Early Christian theology took over from the pagan philosophers of Greece its interpretation of the psychology of human motivation, and according to this psychology the motives of the natural man never can rise higher than exercise of prudence. To all the Greeks—Epicurean and Stoic, Platonist and Aristotelian—the moral issue is one between reason and the passions. Virtue is the control of the passions by reason. The highest virtue is wisdom, a rational knowledge of what is good for man, and so far as a man is wise he seeks to obtain this good. The virtue of wisdom is thus an enlightened form of self-interest, or prudence. The other virtues,

justice, temperance and courage, are various ways in which the passions require to be controlled in order for the soul to maintain its own true well-being. The basic problem of all Greek ethical theories was to show that all that is involved in justice and courage is required by enlightened regard for self, e.g., that "justice is the health of the soul." A love that involved self-sacrifice, if it could not be harmonized in some such way with rational self-regard, was not a virtue, but an irrational passion.

Christian theologians, seeking to harmonize their religious thought and experience with what was thought to be the best secular science of their day, accepted this interpretation of human motivation as true of the natural man and his virtues—virtues which, because moved by self-interest, contained no spiritual merit. But they did not abandon the conviction that the command of God is to love one's neighbor, and they did not deny the experience that, through Christ, they had found the power to do it. This, they said, was the work in their hearts of the Spirit of God, the gift of his grace. In the technical language of theology faith and hope and love came to be spoken of as the "theological" virtues, "infused" by divine grace. But since man could not *achieve* these virtues of himself, and since the natural virtues of wisdom, justice, temperance and courage, being all mere effects of self-interest, could not *merit* them, and since God had given them only to a few, it was inevitable to conclude that God distributed these gifts by "particular election." Thus the Augustinian and Thomistic theology, which has distorted the concepts of God and man in the orthodoxies of both Catholicism and Protestantism, arose as a logical conclusion drawn from a combination of Christian ethical truth with a false pagan psychology.

The psychology of motivation, which is the root of the trouble here, cannot be said to be derived from the Thomistic arguments for the existence of God, but both come from the same source—from the Greek philosophers with their exaggeration of the functions and capacity of human reason. Rightly understood, reason, or intelligence, is the instrument which functions as guide to the individual in pursuit of the objectives which hold his interest. He is interested in many things, including values to be realized in the lives of others as well as his own. And reason seeks out the ways and means to realization of these ends, and it finds ways to harmonize them when they conflict and to decide which are most important when they

cannot be harmonized. Man's moral character consists in the integrated structure of his interests, his goodness in the predominance among them of love toward his fellows, his moral responsibility in his capacity to rearrange and integrate his interests in accord with what he conceives to be the deepest meaning and fullest potentialities of life. The function of faith is to give him a vision of life's meaning that calls for the best that is in him. Reason may critically examine, purify and enlighten that vision but it cannot reach the point where the vision of faith must go. To refuse to commit oneself in faith beyond the modest limits of reason's assurances is to shirk the challenge of the best we can conceive. But to claim for reason an assurance that reason cannot give is to fortify oneself in error.

There can be no doubt that the rationalistic proofs of the existence of God, which Christian theologians derived from the Greeks, encouraged them in the unquestioning acceptance of the Greek psychology with its prudential interpretation of the moral motive. Presenting, as it did, arguments which seemed to show that man's intelligence is sufficient to prove to him the existence of God, if only he faces the question with an open mind, it made doubt appear as a wilful sin and prudence appear as a sufficient moral motive. It also gave the believer a confidence in the rightness of his own views on religion and ethics which encouraged him to feel justified in using the power of civil law to enforce conformity on those who doubted or differed. This attitude was further encouraged by a further development of rationalistic philosophy in ethics. The same over-confidence in reason, applied to the problem of framing specific ethical principles more definite than the duty of love to one's neighbors, led to the doctrine of natural law that supports the confidence in their own judgment on ethical questions which make dignitaries of the Catholic Church feel justified in using various forms of pressure, including civil law in a Catholic state, to force their own conceptions of right and wrong on those who differ from them.

Reason, Dogma and the Claim to Authority

From the claim to know God's existence and goodness by pure reason Thomas Aquinas passed confidently to the claim to know the basic features of the moral law. He raises the question[3] whether

3. Cf. *Summa Theologica,* 1:2:Q94.

there is but one principle of the moral law, or many, and concludes that the moral principles known to reason, like those known to logic, must be many. The first precept, he proceeds to say, is to do good and avoid evil. It would have been well if he had stopped there and left the rest to empirical inquiry as to what is good in various different conditions, but, confident in the power of pure intuitive reason, he goes on. "Since all those things to which man has a natural inclination are naturally apprehended by reason as being good . . . the order of the precepts of natural law is according to the order of natural inclinations." What then are the inclinations of man's nature? The definition of man derived from Aristotle, together with its background of Aristotelian philosophy, is turned to provide an answer by presenting an analysis of the essence (or nature) of man. Man is a *substance,* and since it is the natural inclination of all substances to persist in their own being this must be part of man's essential good; it is therefore a moral law that man should preserve his own life. Man is an *animal,* and since it is the natural inclination of animals to propagate offspring and preserve and train them, this also is part of man's good, and there is a moral law that man should perform these functions. Man is *rational* and his inclination as rational is to know the truth about God and to live in society; these, therefore are also part of man's good and from these goods reason may derive a great many moral rules, requiring the preservation and promotion of religious truth and the maintenance of the social order.

The application of ethical teaching as a complex set of specific absolute principles led to problems of conflict of principle and required the development of casuistry. Higher duties must be made to take precedence over lower, and reason must determine which is higher. Thus the fulfillment of the good of our animal nature in the inclination to increase and multiply must be subject to limitation by duties to pursue higher goods in the service of God and man. But the claim that the basic principles of the moral law are as clear as those of logic, and the details and difficulties determinable by rational inquiry, makes men who are sure of their own intelligence, or are fortified in their views by the consensus of centuries in a great institution, believe that they *know* with certainty what is right and that those who differ from them are wilfully blind. Thus the overweening claims of reason justify the use of social pressures, ecclesiastical sanctions, and the force of civil law where it is available, in the suppression of those who, for conscience sake, are moved to object to the dictates of the established tradition, or of its new authoritative interpretations.

Finally, we should point out, that these claims of reason also bolster the claims to certainty in the receipt and interpretation of revelation. Since it is claimed that the existence and will of God can be known by reason the fact is not recognized that, for the higher moral development of man, the objective certainty of God's existence must remain hidden from us. In the absence of this insight it is logical to suppose that a God of love would give to man clear demonstration of his existence and his interest in man, and a revelation of his will which would supplement and clarify the insights available to reason. Since reason thus suggests that there must be such a revelation, where else is it to be found if not in the Christian tradition? But the Christian tradition is not clear on all points in either its intent or application. So the same logic requires that there shall be an authoritative source of interpretation. Where then can this be found save in the Christian church? And since differences remain even here the same logic leads to the conclusion that the final authoritative source of interpretation must lie in the consensus of its leadership and failing that, in a supreme head of the church on earth. Thus, from the initial premises which claim for reason the capacity to know with certainty God's existence and the basic principles of his law for men, there follow by lucid logic the claims of that authoritative system of controls over the religious life and the moral conscience of the individual such as must inevitably stifle the one and imprison the other in the fetters of the past.

When, therefore, in the light of these considerations, we view with hope the contemporary return to religion, we must recognize the sobering conclusion that those hopes will not be realized if the return to religion seeks the support of reason by pressing the claims of reason to lead us into regions of inquiry where human reason is not equipped to go.

CHAPTER III

The Return to Mysticism: Existentialism

ST. PAUL ACCEPTED THE VIEWS of the philosophers of his day that the "eternal power and deity" of the "invisible" God can be clearly perceived in the world he has created, and he believed that men are blameworthy because they "have exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles." (Rom. 1: 18-23.) Here we have Paul the theologian, speaking out of his philosophical learning and thinking. But though he believed, as was almost inevitable for any thinker contemplating the universe at the level of illumination of Greek science, that nature provides a reasonable demonstration of the power of a supreme being, he also knew that mankind had not been brought by this demonstration to a proper acceptance of God. As a man of faith and a preacher of the Gospel, he knew, however, that there was another and more effective way in which men might be brought to the service of God. Writing to the Corinthians he says, "For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe" (I Cor. 1:21). For the ordinary man, who was not "wise according to the wisdom of this world" (v. 26) Paul found the presentation of the personality of Christ and the testimony of men to the resurrection convincing enough. Yet there were those whose minds needed something more—and these the best and most thoughtful of his sympathetic hearers, whom he calls "the mature" (2:6)—and for them Paul had a "wisdom" of another kind to impart, "not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age" (2:6) but something "God has revealed to us through his Spirit" (v. 10).

> What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,
> nor the heart of man conceived,
> what God has prepared for them that love him. (v. 9)

This is religious mysticism—the claim to a finding of God in direct experience. It is a claim made by select souls in all the great religions of mankind. Indeed, there is no vital religion without an element of mysticism. Broadly defined, it is the conviction that man can have direct awareness of a reality other than he discovers in and through the senses. Though the mystic wisdom of which Paul spoke is, he says, something to be reserved for "the mature" mind yet some experience of the power and leading of what he called the "Spirit of God" or the "Spirit of Christ" he was assured is available to all men. "When we cry 'Abba! Father!' it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Rom. 8:15-16).

VARIETIES OF CONTEMPORARY MYSTICISM

Probably the most impressive evidence of a certain maturity, as well as vitality, in the contemporary return to religion is the manifestation within it of a revival of mysticism, yet without the extravagances that have often been associated with this phase of religious life. The strength of mysticism lies in its immediacy and consequent independence of both authoritarian tradition and reasoned argument. Here man has an experience that carries with it a unique sort of evidence of its own spiritual reality—an evidence that is too subjective to replace faith with a rational, objective certainty, but which is yet a stimulus and support to faith, as an experience that fits its expectations. Yet mysticism also has its weaknesses and dangers. One of these is the tendency to extravagance due to the difficulty of distinguishing the mystical experience from others due to psychological abnormality. Another is the tendency to accept it as confirmation of all elements in the beliefs already held and with which the mystic experience is associated. A third arises from the problem of communicating it to others, for the mystic experience is ineffable and the most the mystic can do is to speak of it in symbols. In estimating the value of the element of mysticism in the contemporary return to religion we must therefore be concerned to discover how far it has avoided, and how far it has been affected by these dangers.

The tendency to extravagance due to the confusion of various forms of abnormal psychological phenomena with mystical experiences is seen in the rash of new cults practicing various forms of

faith healing and autohypnosis, from snake-handling to "the power of positive thinking." The psychology of these phenomena is, today, well enough understood. We know that emotional conflicts engender repressions which issue in illogical anxieties and distressing physical symptoms. We know that any factor that can induce an emotional change in the outlook on life contains the possibility that it may affect the seat of such disturbances, produce a relief of tensions, and eliminate or relieve the mental or physical distress. We know the power of suggestion to work on susceptible and willing minds either to produce or counteract adverse psychological and even physiological conditions. We know that struggles of the moral conscience, whether justified or unjustified, are nearly always involved in some phase of the development of all forms of neurosis. We know that strongly induced suggestions of divine forgiveness, a surge of remorse, a real repentance, a new hope, or a new love, often enough will constitute the key to release of the repressions and a new and more wholesome emotional adjustment, with consequent cure of mental or physical symptoms. We can see that at this point the mystical element in religion makes close contact with natural psychological healing agencies. We are learning to coordinate the religious and psycho-therapeutic attack on such problems. But we have much to learn. And meantime the fumbling religious enthusiast, who has stumbled upon some of the techniques and teachings whereby the depths of the human mind can be touched, is apt to believe that he has become a channel of, or that he has learned to manipulate, a genuine mystical power. And, in the general state of ignorance of matters psychological and theological, he finds a following. The cults thus formed are an important phase of the contemporary return to religion. They are not entirely to be deplored but need to be studied carefully. Something may be learned from them about the spiritual needs of mankind and how they are to be met. Yet, obviously, this phase of the return to religion mixes too much evil with its good to be in any way encouraged. It is not in cults of this kind that the return to mysticism has significance or value for our day.

The really significant return to mysticism in our day has no kinship with exotic or revivalistic cults. Nor has it much relationship with the mysticism of the Middle Ages, of oriental religions, or even with that of the ancient Christian church. It has its roots in the

teaching of the New Testament, but the stimulus for its new growth is found in a revival of interest in a thinker of the early nineteenth century, Sören Kierkegaard. This new philosophy of religion repudiates natural theology, not only as a way to the knowledge of God, but even as a defense of the reasonableness of belief in God. It differs from most forms of philosophical mysticism in rejecting, or at least thoroughly de-emphasizing, the concept of the divine immanence. It insists strongly on the transcendence, the "otherness" of God. But it claims that there are times when man meets God, as it were, face to face, in an I-Thou relationship which is akin to that meeting of person with person when the other person becomes more than an object before us, when we see him as another subject, and when something of the other self enters, as it were, into our own, and genuine communication takes place.

Interpreters of Kierkegaard usually refuse to characterize him as a mystic because he has so much to say in criticism of mysticism, but the mysticism he criticizes is that which most deserves criticism because of its confusion of the mystical with the effects of psychological repression and autohypnosis, the mysticism that claims to have found a way to beatitude and union with God that is not wrought through spiritual anguish. For Kierkegaard, on the other hand, man's primary and most direct awareness of God is in the consciousness of sin. God's love appears first in his condemnation of us, and he is known, not as one with the self, but as an other and higher will making its presence felt in the depths of our subjectivity.

The Message of Kierkegaard

For those of our day, seeking the way to the God they need amidst the spiritual perplexities of a world in turmoil and the intellectual perplexities created for theology by contemporary science, philosophy, psychology and historical research, Kierkegaard has some very significant things to say, some negative and some positive; but he also is, in some ways, seriously misleading.

Those perplexed by the subsidence of what they had regarded as the philosophical foundations of religion have found in Kierkegaard a kindred spirit, who not merely accepts the collapse of natural theology but joins in the attack on it and writes a declaration of independence for faith. He accepted the critique of earlier rationalism

presented by Hume and Kant, and he carried through a devastating attack on the dialectical logic of Hegel to which philosophical defenders of the faith of his day were appealing. But he went further than this, attacking as sacrilege the very attempt to bolster faith by reason. God is to be accepted as he personally confronts us in our own subjectivity. The triumph of faith is in its very readiness to believe what to reason is an absurdity—that God became man. To try to prove the existence of God is "an insult to a king."

The justification of this repudiation of natural theology, so far as it claims *proofs* of God's existence, we have already seen; but in urging that faith is justified in *opposing* itself to reason Kierkegaard surely goes too far. Man has no right to *teach* to others what his reason tells him is untrue; and therefore it cannot be required by God that we should *believe* anything contrary to reason. The place for faith is in the intellectual territory which the limitations of man's knowledge leave wide open. The scientific knowledge and philosophical criticism which today have made so clear that God is not to be found by reason have also made clear how wide that open territory is. We shall see, as we proceed, that faith has no need to cling to absurdities, and that the article of faith that Kierkegaard mentions as a prime absurdity, "that God became man," is not absurd. The warfare of theology and philosophy is as definitely *over* today as is that of science and theology. At least, it is so to those who know the limits of all three. However, to many thoughtful people today who have not yet come to see these limitations, the warfare persists; and by many of these a new courage to maintain their faith has been found in Kierkegaard's bold affirmation of its independence of reason.

Another salutary, but over-stated, negative element in Kierkegaard's message is his assertion of the independence of ethics. What one ought to do cannot be derived as a rule of wisdom or prudence from any assemblage of facts concerning one's interests, as all the classical moralists had tried to do. The fulfillment and enjoyment of one's natural inclinations, however judiciously done, whether under the guidance of an Aristotle or an Epicurus, can never lead to a genuinely moral decision. It is life on a lower level, which Kierkegaard called the "aesthetic." A moral decision is often independent of considerations of prudence and yet must be made if man's life is to realize its potentialities. Kierkegaard correctly saw the decision, by which man accepts responsibility as a moral being, as a free decision by which one rises to a higher level as an authentic personality, but not as a step to be justified as part of the pursuit of happiness.

Here, too, he has had a message for people of our day. Our tragic twentieth century has made nonsense of the philosophies which asserted the ethical sufficiency of enlightened self-interest. It has called for the leadership of men who would, by their own decision, take a stand on higher ground. Every man of true self-respect has felt the inner demand, even though he has felt it to be irrational. Kierkegaard has had a message for the men of our age in his revelation, through the art of literary example, that the demand, though from the prudential stadpoint irrational, is real. The very violence of his language, the exaggeration of his pessimism, and his attacks on smug bourgeois Christianity, have helped to make his presentation of the issue convincing. It has had a message even for those who could not follow him in his further, religious, development of the theme. Atheistic existentialism found in suggestions from Kierkegaard a philosophy of life that gave courage to the men and women of the French resistance.

To Kierkegaard, however, the step from the aesthetic to the ethical stage offers no final resting place. The new plane is reached when one "has once felt the intensity of duty in such a way that the consciousness of it is for him that assurance of the eternal validity of his being."[1] To the ethicist morality is the chief principle of his conduct and the ultimate end of his activity. To Kierkegaard's moral man, as to Kant's, duty is duty for duty's sake, and virtue is its own reward. And one does not need to be religious in order to be moral. Yet, the ethical stage is no permanently satisfying one. The "either-or" with which life presents us is either the empty despair of the aesthetic stage or the transition beyond it which cannot rest until it has taken the second leap—the leap of faith. The life of devotion to duty alone issues in a new despair. For at the moral stage man expects that virtue will prove to be its own reward and that obedience to duty will bring happiness. Yet in this hope he is doomed to disappointment. Further, the strict adherence to rigid

1. S. Kierkegaard, *Either-Or*, Trans. by D. F. and L. M. Swenson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944) II, p. 223.

principles of duty cannot deal with the subtle differences of need of the individual. The way of the rigid moralist is hard with others as well as with himself, and it does not always create happiness. There is a need to pass beyond the stage of mere devotion to duty to a way of love. Finally, the merely ethical life issues in despair because it demands a perfection man cannot maintain. The moralist is inevitably conscious of guilt. He cannot overcome the sense of guilt by being more conscientious, for in doing so he becomes more conscious of his faults. Thus "the dialectic of life," reaching a new despair at the ethical level, drives man to the second leap, the leap of faith. Here the ethic of rules and the stern voice of duty are overpassed and fulfilled in the new way of life, the way of love to God and man. Yet even here, says Kierkegaard, man does not obtain peace and happiness, only the promise and hope of it; and this is accompanied by the abiding bitterness of the consciousness of sin and by the suffering of a wounded pride, in that the last leap has involved the surrender of the independence of his own reason, the leap of faith having involved the conscious acceptance of an absurdity—that in Christ God became man.

The faith attained at the religious stage is, however, not a mere belief about God as self-revealed in Christ. It is, for Kierkegaard, a genuine finding of God. Reality is found only in our own subjectivity, in the very being of act and decision, and God is subjectivity, eternal act. Faith is not mere cognitive content, but will. Objectively, God is uncertain, but "An objective uncertainty held fast in an appropriation-process of the most passionate inwardness is the truth, the highest truth obtainable for an existing individual."[2] And truth or reality, thus grasped, is faith—held in the face of objective uncertainty, the truth being in the holding. In the discourse "What It Means to Seek God" Kierkegaard distinguishes two stages of the consciousness of God, the first characterized by wonder in which God is found within the personality. This is the religion of immanence. But in the second there is a much clearer consciousness and conviction of God, not of God as within us, but of ourselves as sinners before God. "No man can see God without purity and no man can know God without becoming a sinner." Only in the consciousness of sin does man come to a knowledge of God, and "the purest of heart will be the most willing to apprehend his own guilt most profoundly."[3]

2. S. A. Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript,* Trans. by D. F. Swenson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941), p. 182.

The Error in Kierkegaard's Ethical Theory

This is a penetrating and moving analysis of moral and religious experience, yet it has certain defects which render the existential theology, which has been based upon it, less effective than it otherwise might be in pointing the way for a return to religion by people of our day. We shall briefly state what these defects are and then take them up for somewhat more detailed discussion. 1. His ethics, while rightly rejecting prudentialism, relies too much on Kantian formalism, and, as a result, distinguishes too sharply the two stages of morality and religion. Its root error is the acceptance (though with an important modification introduced by Kant) of the same egoistic psychology of the Greeks which we have already seen as distorting so much of traditional theology. 2. This same error in the analysis of human motivation issues in a serious misunderstanding of the appeal of Christianity and of the way in which the Christian message of salvation does its work in the human heart. 3. The concept of revealed religion, which he accepts by faith, and in which he recognizes absurdity, is taken over without criticism from early traditions of Christian theology. 4. The concept of God, which he also adopts by faith, is not one suggested by the spiritual experience in which it rises, and which he analyzes, but one taken over from traditional theology, which derived it in turn from Greek metaphysics. "God," he says, "does not exist. He is eternal."

First, then, regarding Kierkegaard's ethics. He correctly sees that the moral life is, both in logic and in practice, prior to the religious. As a Christian he believes that the moral law is the will of God, and is revealed as such; but he recognizes the important truth that one may be a *moral* person without believing in a divinely revealed moral law, and indeed, that one *must* have some idea of what it is to be a moral person before one can frame the concept of a *supreme* moral being, let alone accept by faith the existence of such a being. For it is out of the ethical experience that one cannot be ethical enough that faith comes. He also sees that the moral life is more

3. S. Kierkegaard, *Thoughts on Crucial Situations in Human Life,* Trans. by D. F. Swenson (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1941), p. 9.

than a matter of prudence, the wise choice of what one sees in the long run to be for one's own truest well-being. His interpretation of human motivation prior to the leap of faith is akin to that of Immanuel Kant. He recognizes two types of voluntary conduct, first the prudential, which operates at the aesthetic stage; second, the moral, or the motive of duty for duty's sake. The motive of impartial and disinterested good will, or general love of mankind as such, which Kant called the "holy will" and attributed to God alone, Kierkegaard regards as a precious effect of the leap of faith, but not as a motive entering into either the aesthetic or ethical stages of life.

At the ethical stage therefore, prior to the acceptance by faith of a revealed moral law, man must in Kierkegaard's view decide on his own moral principles and pursue them out of a sense of duty; for there is no supreme goal of life, such as that of the service of either God or man, to provide either a criterion of right and wrong, or a motive higher than both prudence and moral self-respect—the latter including what Kant called respect for the moral law as a requirement for every rational being. Kierkegaard did not, however, adopt the Kantian view that the principle of logical consistency, embodied in the categorical imperative, is a *sufficient* guide for determination of the detailed content of the moral law. He left that to the personal decision of the ethical individual, and he admitted the human good of individual happiness and the welfare of society as teleological considerations to be taken into account in such decisions.

This is the conception of the moral life adopted from Kierkegaard by the atheistic existentialists, such as Jean Paul Sartre. Kierkegaard clearly saw its deficiencies as involving an anguish of soul in the effort to maintain it. Sartre and his fellows clearly recognize the anguish but prefer to endure it rather than take the leap of religious faith, involving the surrender of reason, in which Kierkegaard saw the only remedy—if the transition to a new and modified anguish at the religious level can be so called.

The anguish of the atheistic existentialist, or of the existential moralist prior to the leap of faith, Kierkegaard has clearly analyzed. The disappointments, which lead to the despair that induces the second leap, we have already referred to. But chief among the difficulties, as discovered by the atheistic existentialists who persistently refuse the second leap, is the responsibility of deciding for oneself what shall be the moral law for one's life. It must take the form of

principles; and these principles one must lay down and adhere to as universal. Yet every principle seems to require exceptions. In crises and exceptional situations they tend to conflict with the greater human good. And the moral motive of duty for duty's sake is hard and brittle. Though self-respect may demand it, human love and good will to men often rise up to defy and cancel it. Further, the human will is not strong enough always to maintain it, and in the sense of failure self-respect is lost. The attempt to live the life of duty for duty's sake belies the hope that virtue is its own reward.

The root of the trouble is in the analysis of human motivation on which the whole ethical theory rests. Mankind does not have to choose between a life on one of two or three levels. Man lives, for the most part, by a mingling of the motives of all three—prudence, moral self-respect, and love. Disinterested good will, general benevolence, or love, is not exclusively associated with the third level. There is a natural interest of the human in the human which takes the form of a concern for human values wherever they are seen. Voluntary conduct is a control of immediate impulse out of concern for human values beyond those of the present moment and beyond one's own immediate future. To be concerned about distant values of one's own life is prudence. To be concerned about values in the lives of others is disinterested good will, or love of one's fellow men.

What mankind recognizes as the *moral* life is the exercise of voluntary control of impulse in these two ways. The latter manifests itself on two levels: first, that of loyalty to the values of one's own group and to special personal relationships such as those created by contracts, explicit and implicit; second, that of disinterested good will which goes beyond these special relations. As ethical thinkers have contemplated the exercise of voluntary control of impulse they have come to recognize that in loyalty to personal and group relationships the moral act, voluntary self-control, operates on a higher level of personal development than the prudential; and they have come to admire and approve it as such. Gradually, and somewhat reluctantly, they have also come to recognize disinterested good will as a still higher achievement of voluntary self-control and have recognized it, in its full and impartial expansion, as the highest achievement of the moral life. Thus the principle of universal benevolence, the Christian *agape,* has come to be recognized very widely as the ultimate rule of the moral life, with the principle of loyalty to

personal and group relations as second, and prudence third. This type of universalistic teleological ethic has received the endorsement of the widest consensus obtained by any theory of the moral life. And a proper understanding of the nature of human motivation and the rising levels of voluntary self-control show that it is confirmed by sound psychology. In the light of it the moral life, religious and non-religious, must be viewed as the expression of man's love for his fellows, and as guided basically by the rule of love—concern for general human welfare. Its joy will be in the achievement of human good; its anguish only in its failures.

"How Am I to Become A Christian?"

This same failure to recognize the operation of disinterested good will in ordinary human motivation is at the root of what we have said to be the second defect in Kierkegaard's analysis of the ethical and religious life—a misunderstanding of the appeal of Christianity and of the way in which the Christian message of salvation does its work in the human heart. At this point we touch the question with which Kierkegaard himself was most deeply concerned, "How am I to become a Christian?" He poses and answers this question in *The Concluding Unscientific Postscript,* written under the pseudonym of Johannes Climacus. The pseudonym does not mean, however, that it is not Kierkegaard's own answer. Johannes is presented as an earnest and honest enquirer who, at the ethical stage of life, seeks the way to a valid experience of Christian faith, and the *Postscript* contains much of Kierkegaard's profoundest thought. The answer he finds for this vital question, and the analysis of motivation involved, must therefore be taken as Kierkegaard's own. It is most clearly stated in the following quotation from the *Postscript.* "Christianity is spirit, spirit is inwardness, inwardness is subjectivity, subjectivity is essentally passon, and in its maximum an infinite, personal, passionate interest in one's eternal happiness."[4]

This must be recognized as Kierkegaard's own answer, not merely that of the fictional Johannes Climacus, for it is central to his whole philosophy. One of his most sympathetic interpreters, Reidar Thomte, states the position thus:

There is only one objective in Kierkegaard's philosophy of religion, and it is expressed in the words of Johannes Climacus. "I assume that there awaits me a highest good, an eternal happiness. . . . I have heard that Christianity proposes itself as a condition for the acquirement of this good. Now I ask how am I to become a Christion." The pathos behind these words overpowered Kierkegaard's whole life. It was the burden of his whole work as an author. He who is not vitally interested at this point can never understand Kierkegaard. . . . The principle which determined his ethical and religious philosophy is expressed in the words: "In relation to an eternal happiness as the absolute good, pathos is not a matter of words, but of *permitting* this conception to transform the entire existence of the individual." There is no religiosity and no ethical life apart from this principle: it is fundamental in all that Kierkegaard has written.[5]

4. *Concluding Unscientific Postscript,* p. 391, *op. cit.*

These passages must not be taken as denying the reality of Christian love. When Kierkegaard writes of the meaning of the Christian life to one who participates in it he is perfectly clear about that. It consists in loving God with all one's heart—love which enables one to love one's neighbor as *oneself.* Johannes Climacus has not attained to the level of the genuine Christian life to realize this, the deeper meaning of Christianity. But he speaks what Kierkegaard believed it must mean to one who stands on the verge and is about ready to take the leap of faith. Such an one must know guilt. He must be engaged in the moral struggle and have learned that it is not enough. In Kierkegaard's understanding of human motivation his life—indeed *all* human life—is a pursuit of happiness. He has taken the step to the ethical level and, hoping that virtue will prove its own reward, and responding to the call of duty, he strives to do his duty for duty's sake. As this, too, fails him he begins to hold by faith that the moral law is the law of the eternal and his sense of duty the expression of the eternal within him. This is what Kierkegaard regards as the lower level of religiosity, the religion of immanence. Though troubled by guilt the man at this stage has not developed yet that sense of sin in which he stands "before God" and under God's condemnation. When he does that the sense of immanence will be lost in recognition of the complete transcendence of God. Here, at last, he surrenders the concern for earthly happiness. He surrenders, too, his pride of reason, and cherished moral self-respect. He accepts the mystery of the eternal subject made objec-

5. *Kierkegaard's Philosophy of Religion,* pp. 218-219. Princeton University Press, 1948.

tive in the person of Christ, the humiliation of himself as sinner, and he has become a Christian. Henceforth, through the love of God, there will grow in him the capacity to love others as himself. He has exchanged the pursuit of earthly happiness for the hope of an eternal happiness.

It is just such a conception as this of the turning to the Christian religion that aroused the fine scorn of Nietzsche, and the impatient protests of Bertrand Russell and John Dewey. The first of these protests against the low view of life which makes it a pursuit of personal happiness; the last two protest against the contentment with a personal happiness that is eternal to the neglect of the earthly happiness of others. If theology is to appeal to the hearts and heads of enlightened people today it must repudiate this unworthy interpretation of human motivation. It must begin by recognizing what Bishop Butler and Francis Hutcheson pointed out in the 18th. century, and what modern psychology and social studies are making clear—that it is just as natural for man to love his fellows as to hate them, and a great deal more common, that psychological egoism is an error, and the interpretation of the goal of life as the pursuit of happiness is a grievous mistake that is self-defeating.

Man's sense of guilt *tends* to arise wherever he is conscious of having destroyed greater values in the lives of others for the sake of lesser values in his own. Set habits of an egoistic character and narrow group loyalties may make him blind to this guilt, but it cannot be repressed without inner disturbance. If ethical teaching forces the mind to attend to such guilt it disturbs us until we make peace with it. The problem of life is to find a motive that can lift us above our egoistic motives and narrow group loyalties to be true to what we recognize as the best in us. The concept of Fatherhood of God can do this if we give it sufficient attention. But the Christian message of the Christ as one in whom God's love comes seeking us—seeking all the way from Bethlehem to Calvary—presents us with a God who wins our love as no other can. If we accept God as revealed in Christ, one whom we can love because he first loved us, we begin to know the power in our lives of redeeming love. It is not that then we first begin to love our fellow men, but that we have a new power to love them that was not ours before.

Yet Kierkegaard is right in saying that without the consciousness of sin there is no awareness of the presence of God—and that we

are aware of him most clearly, not as a power immanent in ourselves, but as an other and higher will to which our will is opposed. It is when our own consciences condemn us, when we try to deny them and flee from them, that we are conscious of a power within our own subjectivity that is more than our will—a universal will to universal good that other men feel constraining them too. The leap of faith is the interpretation of this demand felt within us, that we concern ourselves impartially with the good of others besides ourselves, as the demand of a Will that is Other and Higher than our own—the will of God. But this presence of God as an Other and Higher Will is only felt when there is a call of duty that is too high for us. When we contemplate only a goodness that we find easy to maintain we become self-righteous and lose the sense of the Awful Presence of God. Spiritual pride is spiritual death. It is here again that the revelation of God in Christ comes in to stir the dull embers of spiritual life. No man can contemplate the Christ and compare the Christ life with his own without feeling a blow to shatter his spiritual pride. With attention to the Christ comes conviction of sin and the awareness of that Other and Higher Will that condemns us. Then must we either bow to him in love and adoration or harden our hearts against him, taking refuge in a renewal of spiritual pride, bolstered with excuses that compare ourselves with other men. If, on the other hand, we accept him then we learn the meaning of the declaration of the apostle—that Christ is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes.

Revelation and the "Word of God"

The third of the four difficulties we have said are to be found in Kierkegaard's philosophy of religion is his acceptance, by faith, of a concept of revealed religion taken without criticism from the Christian tradition in spite of the recognition of manifest absurdity.[6] When we come to the discussion of the fourth point, which we shall deal with in our next lecture, we shall find that what he regards as the greatest absurdity of the faith—that God became man—is susceptible of an interpretation which is not absurd. But that does not remove the difficulty. The Christian tradition of revelation has, since Kierkegaard's day, been subjected to historical criticism which

6. This is an example of the second of the three weaknesses or dangers of mysticism mentioned on p. 41.

shows its synthetic character and human origins. It is a mingling of history, legend and myth. And the advances of science have completely upset the world-view implicitly or explicitly accepted throughout. No faith, unless it is either ignorant or wilfully blind, can today accept this whole Biblical tradition as revelation in a literal sense.

In the face of this mass of evidence against Biblical literalism those who, in the present day, found in Kierkegaard a guide to faith have modified his conception of biblical revelation. This modification has taken two forms—an earlier and milder form in the theology of Barth and Brunner, and a more radical form in that of Bultmann and Tillich.

Probably Barth's most significant contribution to contemporary theology is his reinterpretation (which owes much to Luther) of the doctrine of the Word of God. The "Word of God," in its primary sense, says Barth, must be sharply distinguished from the book we call the Bible. It is the *Logos,* the eternal reason, meaning and purpose of God. God reveals himself to man, not in human words, written or spoken, but existentially, in personal encounter, in what Emil Brunner, following Martin Buber, calls the I-Thou relationship. Above all, God reveals himself in the living person of Jesus Christ who is "the Word made flesh," i.e., the eternal purpose manifested in history. The Bible is the Word of God, in a third sense, in that it contains the story of the Christ and *in so far as it witnesses* and is *understood as witnessing* to the Christ through whom the eternal Word is revealed. This Word, as found in the Bible, is recognized by us only by faith. The Bible, as a book, is a human document. It contains the record of a history in which God has again and again confronted individual men, and of their response and interpretation of their existential meeting with God. This history is God's prophetic preparation of man for the divine self-revelation in Christ. But the Bible itself is a man-made record, and its story is told in the background of a pre-scientific world-view which we can no longer hold. The critical work which has been done on the biblical record as a composition of history, legend and myth must be accepted; but in the history faith can discern the "mighty acts of God," especially the incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection, in which the eternal Word is revealed.

The difficulty with this interpretation of biblical revelation is that

each person must decide, on purely subjective grounds, which part of the biblical record is to be accepted as history recording "mighty acts" of God in which his Word is revealed and which is not. At this point we see clearly the weaknesses, already mentioned, of a mysticism which repudiates both the checks and the support of reason. Because of the difficulty of distinguishing the mystical experience from other unusual psychological experiences, and because there is no language in which that experience can be expressed, the claim for its revelatory character is spread over a whole web of traditional belief and suggestive experiences associated with it. The mystical experience of confrontation by the divine convinces man of the reality of God and the moral law, but if the right of reason to both criticism and support of this interpretation is surrendered then tradition and pride of opinion lead to claims being made for the extent of revelation which neither reason nor the mystical experience itself can justify.

This weakness of mysticism, and the extravagances of the Barthian claims for revelation in interpretation of the significance of the Christian's confrontation by the Word, are remedied, however, in another phase of the movement of existential theology, i.e., in the work of Rudolph Bultmann and Paul Tillich. These thinkers have recognized clearly the limitation of mysticism as a source of knowledge, i.e., the ineffability of its message and its need of human interpretation. They have carried to its logical conclusion the distinction between the Word of God (the eternal purpose, reason or meaning of the universe) and the Bible as the vehicle of transmission and interpretation of existential confrontations of men of God by the Word. For Bultmann and Tillich the distinction of elements of history and legend in the bible is set aside as of little significance. The Bible as a whole is myth, but the biblical myth is a story that functions as record, interpretation and transmission of man's existential encounters with the eternal Word in the history of Israel and of the founding of the Christian church.[7] This is the revelation of God in Hebrew-Christian history, and the making of the Bible is itself the most important part of this history in which the Word is revealed. But that revelation is not to be found in the biography

7. Here we have the reply of existential theology to the third of the three weaknesses or dangers of mysticism mentioned on p. 41.

and words of an historical Jesus, whose historical figure and exact words are forever lost to us, in the providence of God, through lack of exact contemporary records. It is to be found instead, in Jesus as the Christ, the Christ of the New Testament as we have it, and as seen in the background of the whole Bible as we have it.

On this view of Bultmann and Tillich, we may thank God for the Jesus of history, whom we do not know, because he left the impression on his contemporaries which created in the mind of the infant church the Christ whom we do know. For that which is there revealed in the language of myth is that which is summed up by the author of the Fourth Gospel in the same religious language when he wrote: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life."

This truth, thus conveyed, say these thinkers, we may know by faith—know, that is, not with objective certainty, but with the subjective certainty that grows as it is confirmed in daily life, as we find confirmation of the hopes that are raised by and for a life that is lived in accord with its meaning. That life, the life of faith, has its initial occasion and foundation in those existential moments when, in our waywardness and selfishness, we are confronted by a Power that says with a unique authority "This thou shalt do," "That thou shalt not do." It is this Power that also condemns us when we disobey his will. The life of faith has its beginning when, conscious of having sinned against that Other and Higher Will, we *turn,* we are *converted,* we are *won* by his pursuing love, to surrender our opposing will to his, and return the love with which we have found he first loved us. It has been ever thus that men have found God—found him seeking them. And many a man who never knew the Christ has thus found and been found by God. But without the story of the Christ, the preaching of the cross, few can recognize God when he finds them, and none prior to Christ have recognized him for what he is—the God of infinite love, who calls upon us to love one another as Christ has loved us. That is why we must not be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, though it comes to us out of a hoary past, clothed in the symbols that men used when civilization was young and science had scarce begun. For the truth that those symbols convey is not of the realm of scientific and historical fact but of the inner secrets of the human heart and of a divine purpose in the life

of man that can be seen only with the eyes of faith and hope. And these things the ancient symbols that express the language of the heart are best suited to convey.

This, in brief, is the "new theology" of the mid-twentieth century. It is the most enlightened and sober expression of the return to mysticism manifested in the existential theology of our time. For its intellectual honesty, the perspicacity of its psychological and spiritual insight, and its sensitivity to Christian experience it deserves our profound respect. In it we find mysticism frankly facing the criticisms of reason; and this is good. But this theology goes further than that—and a step too far. It accepts the limitations reason imposes on it without, in turn, seeking from reason any aid. The result is that religion is left speaking only in the language of the heart, the language of myth, saying nothing in the language of reason, of truth to be grasped by the intellect and common sense. We may well ask: Is this enough? Though we must walk by faith and not by sight, and though it is the language of symbols that serves best to warm the heart, we may well ask whether faith can be clear and strong if it is formulated in the language of myth alone. Surely it should be possible to state the intent of faith and the meaning of its historic symbols in language that can appeal to the head as well as the heart. Without such statement faith can be neither clear nor confident. Its source and power must lie in an experience which is mystical, but to pursue its way faith must have a message that connects the symbols of mysticism with the facts of man's life and hope in this world. Religion can and must use the language of myth, but it cannot evade the task of stating the essentials of its faith, its vision of reality, in terms that get their meaning from the facts of man's common understanding. Theology must pass beyond mysticism and myth to formulate in common intelligible terms a statement of enlightened faith.

CHAPTER IV

The Return to Enlightened Faith: Realism

IN THIS CHAPTER, we take up the question of what concept of God an enlightened faith may hold. In our last chapter we stated, concerning Kierkegaard, that the concept of God which he adopts by faith is not that which is suggested by the spiritual experience which he describes as that in which faith arises. It is, instead, derived from a theological tradition going back to the Greek philosophers. "God," he says, "does not exist, He is eternal." Yet the experience out of which faith comes is one in which the divine influence is first believed to be felt as a power within us that makes for righteousness, then as a power beyond us which convicts us of sin, and finally as a power who loves us in spite of our insufficiency. The experience is thus one which suggests the existence of God as a personal agent who communicates himself to us. Yet the theology adopted by faith asserts a form of being that undergoes no change and is beyond all particularization, a form of being that could not be manifested in any distinguishable phase of human experience, mystical or otherwise.

METAPHYSICAL DEITY AND THE GOD WE ENCOUNTER

This Greek conception of ultimate reality as the ground of all particular existence, timelessly complete in itself, involves, as we have already seen, a recognition that, concerning God, thus conceived, nothing can be said in positive univocal terms. This is recognized by Kierkegaard and his followers in contemporary existential theology. Furthermore, they, quite correctly, reject the Scholastic claim to formulate logical proofs of the existence of such a being and the claim that concepts such as "existence," "personality," "power" and "love" can be predicated of such a being even in an *analogical* sense. God is affirmed by faith and faith further affirms that certain particulars of experience constitute a revelation of him; but what is thus known by revelation is his mighty acts in our world

and not a set of predicates which can be applied, even analogically, to the deity. Consistently with this position we have seen how theologians of this school of thought have increasingly come to recognize that the language in which this revelation is announced cannot be regarded as ordinary factual language. For Kierkegaard the belief that God became man in the person of Jesus Christ is an absurdity in which faith requires the surrender of reason. For Bultmann and Tillich it is only saved from being an absurdity by being conceived as a myth in which is expressed the response of the New Testament church to its experience of the holy in the witness of the apostles to this life and teaching of Jesus.

It is clear that a great gulf here separates the concept of God held by faith, on the one hand, and, on the other, the experience of personal encounter in which faith arises, together with the biblical language and symbols in which it is expressed. It is the breadth of this gulf which drives conservative exponents of existential theology to complete repudiation of philosophy as either aid or critic of theology, and others, less conservative, to the conviction that the truth of man's relation to God as disclosed in the bible is expressed entirely in the language of myth and can only so be expressed. This irrationalism is a refuge for faith from a dilemma which is, however, one created by the very thing which the one group emphatically repudiates and the other admits only with reluctance to aid in the elucidation of its faith, namely, philosophy. It is the God of traditional Greek philosophy that drives faith into irrationalism. The great task of contemporary theology should be, not an accommodation of faith to traditional philosophical conceptions of God through a radical extension of the concept of myth in biblical religion, but a fresh interpretation of religious experience and of biblical theology in terms of contemporary philosophical concepts which will bring more realism into the interpretation of biblical thought, whether expressed in myth or in language that can be taken literally and univocally.

GOD AS "BEING ITSELF"

In order to see the necessity for this fresh approach we shall first examine the attempt at a reconciliation of biblical and traditional philosophical concepts of God presented by Paul Tillich. Tillich is emphatic in his insistence that religious thought cannot stop short with the claim to the bible as a vehicle of revelation. He says:

Revelation is never revelation in general, however universal its claim may be. It is always revelation for someone and for a group in a definite environment, under unique circumstances. Therefore he who receives revelation witnesses to it in terms of the social and spiritual conditions in which the revelation has been manifested to him. . . . The basic error of fundamentalism is that it overlooks the contribution of the receptive side in the revelatory situation and consequently identifies one individual and conditioned form of receiving the divine with the divine itself. . . . The character of biblical religion makes possible and necessary the confrontation of biblical religion with philosophy. . . . Philosophy is that cognitive endeavor in which the question of being is asked.[1]

The claim to revelation, therefore, does not enable us to dispense with an enquiry into the nature of existence. Not to pursue the enquiry is simply to accept uncritically some common sense or traditional assumptions—to assume a philosophy without examining its basis. Statements of faith about God and man make assumptions about the most general characteristics of existence which it is the business of philosophy to examine. Even though the statements of faith are interpreted, as Tillich interprets them, as using the language of myth, they must, in order to have meaning for our lives, receive an interpretation at some point in language that refers to objective actuality. This, too, Tillich recognizes. He gives a subjective definition of religion. Religion is man's concern for that which is of ultimate significance for his life. "The object of theology is what concerns us ultimately."[2] But, since our ultimate concern must be with that which is ultimately real, this object of concern, God, must be ultimate reality itself. Thus Tillich pronounces the one literal, unsymbolic statement, of his theology, "God is being itself." But beyond this lies the philosophical task of analyzing the meaning of this concept. What does it mean to *be?*

The search for ultimate reality beyond everything that seems to be real is the search for being itself, for the power of being in everything that is. (p. 13)

Upon examination, however, this one non-symbolic, metaphysical statement admitted into Tillich's theology turns out to be quite

1. Paul Tillich, *Biblical Religion and the Search for Ultimate Reality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), pp. 3-5. (Page references in parentheses in this chapter are to this book.)

2. Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951) I, p. 12.

meaningless. To say that ultimate reality is of ultimate concern for us is trite, if not completely tautological. If "being itself" means "the power of being in everything that is" why bother to add that "it can become a matter of being or not-being for us?"[3] The question that is of real religious importance is whether the ultimate power of the universe is consciously concerned about us. Biblical theology says that this power is personal, righteous, loving and able to determine our destiny, but it says these things in symbolic language and as an expression of faith. We turn to philosophy to ask whether it is reasonable to hold and teach that these biblical symbols convey some significant truth as to the nature of ultimate reality, and whether ultimate reality is, or is not, in accord with their practical implications. The answer must be given in metaphysical statements that use language non-symbolically. And here Tillich's one metaphysical proposition is of no help. We already know that whatever it is that is ultimately real is of ultimate concern for us. What we want to know is what we may reasonably believe about the nature of what is ultimately real. What meaning can be given to the concept of "being itself"?

Tillich has a reply to this question, but it is of no help. He rejects the empirical ontology which seeks, by an analysis of experiences, to discover the ultimately irreducible characters of particular existence and construct a world-view which tentatively systematizes them. He clings instead to the ancient assumption that reality must be sought behind appearances and that reality must be One, that there must be a single "power of being" embodied in everything that is. Here he seems to be deceived, as Plato was, by the assumption that verbal unities imply ontological unities. The argument seems to run thus: Everything that exists *is;* it has *being;* there must therefore be in everything a common power to *be*. We are told to contemplate what we mean when we say that something *is,* for therein is hidden the mystery of what it means to *be*. In any case it is assumed that since "is" has a meaning there must be something referred to by the present participle "being," and this is "being itself."

A slight acquaintance with contemporary linguistic analysis reveals the fallacy in this. The verb "to be" is not a verb with a refer-

3. *Systematic Theology,* Vol. I *(op. cit.),* p. 14.

ent, like "walk," which refers to a particular sort of movement. Its function is purely logical. It connects terms but refers to nothing. It states a logical relation such as identity or predication but does not refer to an event. Even the "is" of existence only has meaning by reason of unexpressed but assumed predicates asserting a relation of the thing to experience, thought, or things in space. To assert existence is, as Tillich has noted, to assert that some particular has a distinguishable relation to other particulars. For that reason, believing that God is not a particular being, he says it is idolatrous to say that God exists.

To say that something *"is,"* without specifying any predicate or relation, is therefore merely to declare vaguely that it has some place in either thought or experience or the system of other events. The "is" does not in any way refer to any "power to be" or other property possessed by all that exists. The concept of "being itself" as a universal and ultimate reality behind all appearances, and manifest in all particular occurrences, is a figment of the philosophical imagination created by abstraction from the forms of language.

The persistence of this hoary error in contemporary theology is particularly unfortunate for another reason. It leads to a conception of ultimate reality which is impossible to reconcile with the biblical conception of a personal God. Tillich is clearly aware of this difficulty. His small book on *Biblical Religion and the Search for Ultimate Reality* is a gallant attempt to face the fact that religious faith cannot isolate itself from statements having philosophical implications even while recognizing that these are in conflict with what appear to him as the more obvious conclusions of ontology. The concept of an ultimate Being behind all particular existence must appear as an immutable unity too grand and cold to attract human devotion and too completely responsible for all that occurs to allow room for genuine human responsibility. If the symbols of biblical religion are to mean for human life what they seem to have meant in the life of the believer then either this ontology must be completely abandoned or selectively interpreted by philosophic reasoning under the guidance of faith. In view of its fallacious basis in semantic confusion the former would be the proper procedure, but theologians who have not yet recognized the validity of this criticism still attempt the latter. Unfortunately, Tillich is still among

those who seek this difficult and unsatisfactory solution of the problem.

Creation, Eternity and God's Personality

One of the features of Tillich's thesis, which at first sight seems attractive, is that to say that God is being itself puts the question of God's reality beyond the need of proof. The question, however, takes another form. It becomes the question whether ultimate reality is compatible with the conception of God embodied in biblical myth and symbol: is the ontology which conceives God as "the power of being that is in everything" (p. 16) compatible with Christian concepts of creation, of man's ethical responsibility, and of God's personality, love, self-revelation, and purpose with the world?

In answer to the question regarding creation Tillich replies that "being itself" must not be conceived as a static entity but rather as "the power to be," that this power must not be conceived as creating out of a primeval matter that receives and resists the creative act, but rather that God created the world out of the potentialities of his own being. Concerning these "potentialities" he is ready to adopt the traditional view that "the essences or potentialities of the world are eternal in the divine 'mind' " (p. 73).

In comment on this interpretation we may point out that there is no longer any difficulty with reconciling the concept of creation with modern science. Matter is now conceived as a form of energy, or activity, and one explanation of the expanding character of the physical universe is that matter, in the form of hydrogen atoms, is being continuously created in outer space. A cautious theistic metaphysics should speak of the creation of matter and of sensory objects out of potentialities contained eternally (in some sense of "eternal") in the *being* of God, not necessarily in his "mind." But creation, thus conceived, is quite as compatible with a panentheistic type of theism as with its more traditional form. It is even compatible with the view, suggested by A. N. Whitehead, Charles Hartshorne and others, that not only the animate, but even the physical, world, once created, may be beyond the direct and immediate control of the divine will, since all that is created out of the potentialities of God's being may necessarily be endowed with some degree of spontaneity. Such a view not only gives reality to human freedom

and moral responsibility but also provides an answer to the problem of physical evil.

The difficulties, for biblical religion, with the traditional ontology lie, however, not with the concept of creation but with the concept of "eternity," when the eternal being of God is distinguished from the transitory existence of the world in time. This distinction is implicit in any approach which adopts the concept of God as an ultimate cause or power completely transcendent to the world of transitory things. Such a being must be beyond time either in the sense of being completely timeless or as including all time in an eternal present. Tillich adopts the latter alternative.

> Eternity transcends and contains temporality, but a temporality which is not subject to the law of finite transitoriness, a temporality in which past and future are united, though not negated in the eternal presence (p. 78).

This conception of the eternal as including and transcending time, it has often been pointed out, is rendered intelligible by the analogue of our experience of succession. To experience succession the one act of noticing must endure through and be set over against the succession of events noticed. This means that, when the last stage of the succession and the act of noticing are complete the earlier stages of the experienced succession are still present to consciousness, though temporally distinguished from the later stages. Similarly, it is suggested, the divine experience may be a single attentive and creative act which, in its completeness, is set over against the whole course of transitory events which constitute the history of the universe. If this, however, were the nature of the universe it could contain no open possibilities. All is already complete in the presence of the eternal attentive and creative act. Man's decisions can decide nothing. Man's will is futile and the divine act cannot be an act of will if will means to hope, to plan and to strive. God is not a person whom we can really serve or grieve. Sin and righteousness are conditions we cannot help. Love and devotion have nothing to do for in reality everything is already done.

If this is the meaning of Christian theology then the life of man would be better without it. If escape from these conclusions is attempted by rejecting the help of the analogue of man's experience of succession in the interpretation of this concept of the eternal then

the concept becomes a mere jumble of self-contradictions or of words to the meaning of which experience gives no key. If we revert to the concept of the eternal as timeless being we bring up all the same problems and others in addition. The only hope for a conception of God which is not either evil or meaningless is to abandon the attempt to conceive God as a reality *beyond* time.

This does not mean that we must think of God as *in* time. That would be to make time absolute and neither theology nor physics have any use for an absolute time. What we need to do is to recognize time as a relation *between* the acts of God just as we recognize it as a relation between human acts and between physical events. We must also abandon the attempt to arrive at the idea of God by sheer logic or sheer intution. Neither by considering the notion of "cause" nor the notion of "is" can we arrive at a conception of God that is adequate to the religious life. There is no more hope for theology in identifying the concept of God with a concept of being that does not need to be proved than in identifying it with a concept that supposedly *can* be proved. We must go back to the experience in which religious faith arises—the experience of the other and higher will that condemns us and yet loves us—and we must construct that view of God and the world which is most logically required by that experience taken in conjunction with our other experience, including both our scientific knowledge, the biblical tradition and history. This is the task of philosophical theology. The conclusions which it reaches we must hold by faith.

The God That Fulfills Man's Needs

What, then, we may ask, are the metaphysical assertions that we must make (a) to meet man's religious need, (b) to fulfill the reasonable expectations of the experience in which faith arises, (c) for faith to be recognized as consonant with the Hebrew-Christian tradition? To answer these questions we may refer back to our earlier lectures. Man's religious need is primarily that of an object of devotion, love and loyalty, above and beyond himself and the individuals and narrow groups to which his sentiments grow naturally attached through satisfying human associations. Man needs an object of devotion, such that love and loyalty to him will direct us to attend impartially to, and feel concern for, the well-being of each and all of our fellow men. Such an object of devotion is found in

the Heavenly Father of biblical religion if conceived, not merely as a symbol of some impersonal entity, but as a genuine personal being who loves all men as his children, is literally grieved by their sin and suffering, and literally rejoices in their goodness and welfare. To the concept of such a being man can respond with hope and trust if he can find it reasonable to believe that this Heavenly Father is able and willing to ensure him opportunity for the ultimate fulfillment of his potentialities as a moral being; and this he can believe if his reason offers no decisive evidence against such a faith and if he can find in his experience some indication of such a supreme personal agency seeking to save him from the errors of his own ways. This last indication he can find in the constraining influence within him which condemns his lack of good will to his fellows and calls upon him to be true to whatever he himself believes to be right. This same indication he can find confirmed in the testimony of men who have felt this same constraint of love and righteousness and witnessed to it as the voice of God speaking to them. In their lives and witness, and above all in that of Jesus, the Christ, he may then see the unfolding of the everlasting and increasing purpose of God in history; and in that whole story of which the bible is the vehicle he may see, in providentially directed fact, symbol and myth, the self-revelation of God to man.

For the Christian religion, thus understood, there is, then, but one metaphysical proposition that must be held to be true. Kant stated it briefly in saying that the moral law is the will of God. More fully it may be stated thus: That man's experience of an influence constraining him to love his fellow men and be loyal to the right as he sees it is due to his relation to an agent who is the source of his life, who is consciously and supremely concerned to provide for the realization of his potentialities as a moral being, and who is able to realize this purpose through creative activity and control of the universe in which man finds himself.

This proposition, it should be noted, is beyond all possibility of empirical tests. No fact of science could possibly verify it or be incompatible with it. The natural sciences are confined to the observation of sensory objects and the study of the laws, or regularities, of their relations. The social sciences and psychology may have something to say about the intentional activities, or purposive concerns, of men. But no proposition based on observation of matters of fact,

physical or psychological, can have anything to say about the existence or non-existence of a super-human conscious agency. Science can describe when and where life and consciousness as we know them make their appearance, but it cannot say that the non-living, non-conscious conditions antecedent to such appearance are the *source* of life and consciousness. Science must admit that the universe as we know it provides in part for the realization of man's potentialities as a moral being; it cannot deny the possibility that there may exist, or be yet produced, conditions for the full realization of those potentialities. Science may describe with increasing fullness the structure and history of the physical universe; it cannot say whether that structure and history do or do not serve the purpose of a mind that is organic to them, or transcends them, and that is concerned with the realization of the potentialities of man as a moral being. An argument may be made that the universe does not appear to be perfectly adapted to that purpose, but this, at most, could only imply that what is created does not remain in all respects under the control of the benign agency that created it; it does not imply that that agent is either incompletely good or not able to realize the ultimate purpose for which he creates. It is therefore quite impossible that scientific knowledge could ever offer any valid objection to what we have set forward as the only metaphysical proposition embodied in the Christian faith.

The Problem of Meaning in Theological Statements

At this point, however, our argument in defense of the rationality of the Christian faith is faced with a new objection. This is the charge of meaninglessness directed against it by the Logical Positivists and their successors. The early form of Positivist objection to all metaphysics as meaningless has now been abandoned, but in less vulnerable form the charge is still made against the metaphysics of theism. Early Logical Positivism based its attack upon the "verifiability criterion" of meaning. This was originally stated as the assertion that a proposition can only have meaning if its truth could be conclusively established in experience.[4] As this would involve rejection of scientific generalizations as meaningless it was modified, by Ayer and others, to the statement that a proposition can only be accepted as meaningful if it is possible for experience to render it

4. A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic* (2nd ed.), p. 37.

probable.[5] In order to recognize the meaningfulness of ethical statements it was then recognized that the criterion, thus stated, applies only to "cognitive" meaning, or statements of fact, while ethical statements were said to have meaning of another sort, "emotive" or "prescriptive." Even thus limited and softened the verifiability criterion has, however, been subjected to strong criticism and, as a weapon with which to attack metaphysics, seems now to survive only as a requirement that, in order to claim that a proposition about matters of fact is significant, in the sense of being either true or false, it must be possible to state some empirical proposition that, if true, would be recognized as requiring its rejection. In this form the metaphysician must finally meet its challenge. His propositions claim to state truths about matters of fact, and as Anthony Flew, in a now famous Oxford symposium, says, "to assert that such and such is the case is necessarily equivalent to denying that such and such is not the case . . . if there is nothing which a putative assertion denies then there is nothing which it asserts either."[6] The theologian is therefore challenged to answer the question "What would have to occur or to have occurred to constitute for you a disproof of the love of, or of the existence of, God?"[7]

As we have just been arguing that no empirical fact could possibly have any bearing on these assertions, either as proof or disproof, it is obvious that we must meet this challenge or stand convicted of having put forward a conception of God that is devoid of meaning.

The first point to be noticed in reply is that, while our statements concerning the existence and love of God are statements of fact, they are statements concerning facts of a peculiar kind, namely the existence of mental acts and experiences. Mental acts and experiences may be directly observed by the person who performs or has them, and commonly are so known if conscious, though they may be subconscious or unnoticed. But they cannot be directly observed by any other person. For that reason they cannot be made the subject-matter of a science. Psychology, in order to become a science, has had to become the science of behavior. We can objectively

5. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

6. *New Essays in Philosophical Theology,* Anthony Flew (ed.) (New York: Macmillan, 1955), p. 98.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 99.

study and generalize about the *reports* other people make of their mental acts and experience and the *behavior responses* which we believe indicate the occurrence of such acts and experience, but we cannot *observe* any mental acts or experiences but our own; and we can only guess and argue by analogy that any other person performs mental acts and has experience. Because of this essential privacy of mental acts and experiences no statement concerning their occurrence in one person can constitute a verification or a refutation of their occurrence in some other person, or in the mind of God.

Some may be tempted to reply to this that we do have highly probable knowledge of the mental acts and experiences of other people derived from their verbal reports and responses to stimuli, and so are able to make many highly probably generalizations concerning these conscious processes in other people. From this it may then be argued that there is good reason to believe that facts concerning the occurrence and non-occurrence of speech and other responses may be taken as reasonable refutation of statements asserting the existence of certain mental acts or experiences in a human mind, and that therefore it should be possible to point to events which might be taken to indicate the existence of mental acts and experiences in a divine mind if there are such; and the absence of such revelatory events must therefore be taken to indicate the non-existence of such divine mental acts and experiences. The answer to this argument must be, first, to point to those experiences in the moral life which faith takes as revelatory of the divine presence and influence; and secondly, since it must be recognized that these experiences may be susceptible of purely naturalistic explanation, we must point out, as we have before,[8] that for God to reveal himself in any unmistakable way would defeat what faith recognizes as his purpose—the realization of man's potentialities as a moral being.

Yet another objection should probably be mentioned and answered here, though it has been referred to before.[9] It is the argument that the amount of evil in the world is a fact incompatible either with God's love or with his power to realize his purposes. The answer to this is, first, to point again to the nature of the purpose

8. Ch. III.

9. Ch. V, pp. 63-64.

faith attributes to God—the realization of man's potentialities as a moral being—and to show that much, though not all, of the evil in the world appears to play an essential part in the realization of such a purpose. Secondly, we should recognize that faith's necessary assertion concerning the power of God does not imply more than a sufficient control over the conditions of man's life, in this life and hereafter, to ensure that he shall have opportunity for the full realization of his potentialities as a moral being. Even the doctrine of creation, which is an important though not an ethically essential part of the Hebrew-Christian tradition, does not, as we have already seen, imply that God must retain complete control over either the animate or inanimate parts of his creation *after* he has created them. In the Hebrew-Christian view God is Spirit, and he creates the physical world out of the potentialities of his own being. There is nothing in such a conception to indicate that the ultimate units of the world thus created must be absolute automata behaving according to rigidly calculable mathematical laws. Only the crudities of an ancient materialism suggest such a conception. Modern physics strongly suggests the contrary. The biblical parable of the tares expresses the view that the seeds of *moral* evil in this world are contrary to God's will and that it is beyond his power to have them rooted out without defeating his own higher purpose. It is therefore not inconsistent with the Biblical conception to extend the same explanation to *physical* evil.

We must come back, however, to the question whether a concept of God's existence and love, which has no implication that could be contradicted by any scientific generalization or allegation of particular fact, has any meaning. The charge is that if it is compatible with every conceivable experience it says nothing. It might appear that we might escape this charge by saying that there is one possibility that would be incompatible with our assertion regarding God, namely, if the world could be shown not to be compatible with the fulfillment of its alleged divine purpose, the realization of man's potentialities as a moral being. This however, is not an adequate reply to the difficulty, for the assertion of faith is not that this purpose is fulfilled in this world, but that it is God's purpose that the process begun here shall have opportunity for completion here or hereafter, and this is a proposition that no allegation of fact or scientific generalization could refute. We must therefore face the

question whether a statement of alleged fact with which no human experience could be incompatible really has any meaning.

Our answer must be that if the statement of alleged fact is a statement about some other person's mental activity or feeling then these statements can have meaning even in cases where no conceivable objective fact could be regarded as incompatible with them. Take the case of a dying man concerning whom the doctor says "I believe he is conscious and can hear us though he is unable to make response, so speak to him." The belief here stated has meaning and calls for action, though there is no conceivable objective occurrence that could be incompatible with it. We need not, however, go to special cases such as this to prove our point. The belief in the existence of other minds, and its opposite, solipsism, are metaphysical doctrines which no conceivable allegation of objective fact can possibly refute. Yet these doctrines, though contradictory, certainly have meaning. The same is true of the Cartesian doctrine of animal automatism and its denial. Both doctrines are compatible with all the facts of human experience, actual and barely conceivable. Yet the conflicting doctrines have important significance. One, for example, has been used to justify animal vivisection without anaesthetics; the other is constantly relied upon to oppose such a practice.

We must recognize that the Positivist criterion of the meaningfulness of a statement, as used in this attack on the significance of assertions concerning the existence and love of God, must be rejected as too narrow. It does not provide for the meaning of statements concerning other minds. A word has meaning, as has been carefully pointed out by one of the most-quoted of Logical Positivists, C. L. Stevenson, if it has a tendency to evoke certain kinds of psychological responses in a hearer.[10] The meaning he says, is *emotive* if the psychological responses are emotional, *cognitive* if the responses are cognitive. To these we should add *practical* meaning, where the combination of emotive and cognitive processes is relevant to a decision and effort to *do* something.

One form of *cognitive* process is a belief in the actual or possible existence of something, either the existence of a *subjective* process in some mind or of something that might in some way be an *object* to some mind. Now it is only beliefs of this last kind that carry with

10. C. L. Stevenson, *Ethics and Language* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1944), p. 54.

them the implication that their truth would involve the denial of some incompatible statement concerning a matter of objective fact. It is here, and only here, that the criterion of meaningfulness used, as we have seen, by some Positivists, to attack the meaningfulness of statements concerning the existence and love of God can be validly applied. But since assertions concerning the existence and love of God are not assertions of the existence of something that might in some way be an *object* to some mind, the criterion of meaningfulness used in this attack is misapplied. These theological assertions have cognitive meaning in that the words have a tendency to arouse in the hearer, and express on the part of the speaker, a belief in the existence of certain mental acts and experiences of a super-human kind, but analogous to the human. They also have practical and emotive meaning in that such beliefs tend to arouse feeling responses which, together with the theological and other beliefs, tend to induce distinctive practical decision and efforts. Far from being meaningless, therefore, these theological assertions have meaning in the fullest sense; they express and tend to arouse definite forms of psychological response of all three kinds, cognitive, emotive, and practical.

Speaking of God in Plain Language

One further question may be raised concerning the meaning of statements about the mental activity and experience of God. Any statement about mental activity and experience must derive the meaning of its terms from human experience. Can terms such as *will, intention, purpose, love* and *grief,* taken from human experience, be applied significantly to God? We have already spoken of the Scholastic claim that this can be done by analogy, and we have rejected this claim as applied to the conception of a God who is beyond time, either in the sense of being timeless or as experiencing all time in the one eternal present. A timeless existence can have no analogy at all to human experience, for in such an existence nothing can *happen.* An experience in which past and future are united in an eternal present can have an analogy only to the aspect of *immediate awareness* in man's *cognitive* activity and no analogy to *will* or to those features of cognition that go beyond what is immediately given to *think, plan and anticipate.* Without will and these further features of cognition an experience would not be *personal.* There would be nothing in the divine experience analogous to personality, love, grief, willing, planning and striving. A being devoid of these features would not be a God who could win our love and deserve our loyal service. It is not required that these phases of the divine life must be exactly like ours, but if the concept of God is to arouse the devotion of men it is essential that these qualities in God should be conceived as *essentially similar* to ours. It is in this sense that we *need,* and rationally *may,* attribute to God qualities *analogous* to those of our own minds. Just as we conceive by analogy an infra-human experience of animals, so we can conceive by analogy the supra-human experience of God. We cannot have exact knowledge of what either the infra-human experience of animals or the supra-human experience of God is like, but we can intelligibly think of them as essentially similar, though in some ways vastly different from our own.

Modern philosophy, having dropped the notion of Being as a timeless reality beyond the particulars which enter into our experience, is much better able to render intelligible the biblical concept of a personal God, whose nature is revealed for us in the person of Jesus Christ, than was possible in terms of the traditional metaphysics derived from the Greeks. To contemporary Naturalism the ultimate categories are those of event, quality and relation. Time is a relation between the beginning and end of an event, and of events to events, and time statements are always relative to an event of observation. Events have duration—a time relation within them—as well as time relations between them, and there is nothing more real than events. They are experienced as enduring, and their duration is their existence. Things and persons are distinguishable and relatively enduring systems of events which enter into many different sorts of relations with each other. And, to an observer, single events and systems of events reveal themselves as characterized by qualities. In the relations between events, and between systems of events, there are certain discoverable uniformities, called causal laws, which render them to some extent predictable and controllable. Whether the relations between all events, or all systems of events, conform to such "causal" uniformities we cannot claim to know, but only so far as they do can we find them predictable. For purposes of research science assumes that they do, but there is no logical necessity to erect this into a metaphysical principle.

A personalistic theism can be stated quite clearly and cogently in these naturalistic terms. Indeed, it may be claimed with good reason that, if philosophy is to indulge at all in the speculative game of constructing a world-view to account for all the known facts systematically, then a philosophy of organism, of a personalistic type, has greater logical simplicity, and better analogical justification for its hypothetical elements, than any of its alternatives. This, of course, is far from constituting a proof of the existence of a personal God. It means, simply, that in the light of all our knowledge, religious faith is entirely reasonable.

The Reasonableness of Personalistic Theism

The claim to a balance of reasonableness on the side of personalistic theism is based on consideration of the problem presented by the origin of mind. For atheistic naturalism minds are temporary phenomena dependent for their existence upon the nervous systems of animal organisms. But, whatever may be the simplest possible unit of mental process, it is so distinct in nature from what we understand as the chemical structure and change of a nervous system that it is entirely unintelligible how it could be produced by any such set of events. The difficulty is that an analytical description of what we understand as a set of chemical events in a nervous system and an analytical description of what we understand as a mental event (e.g., a perception, a feeling, an effort, a decision, a thought) contain no terms in common except time, which is merely a relation between events or between the beginning and end of an event. If the world consists only of events, with their changing qualities, in systematic relation, and if we suppose the world at one time to have consisted only of the sort of events (with their qualities and relations) that are referred to in the description of chemical processes, then the initiation of mental events constitutes an absolute beginning of a new kind of event and is completely unintelligible in terms of any of the "causal" uniformities of relation postulated as in operation.

To avoid such an unintelligible absolute beginning we must postulate that there is continuity (either conscious or subconscious) between all mental events, as there is (apparently) between all physical events, that this continuity is of the kind we find subsisting between mental events where we are aware of their relation (namely

teleological, a means-end relation) and that this system of mental events is without temporal beginning or end. This would mean that our minds are semi-independent systems of activity within a universal world-mind, and the whole world system of mental events is the expression of a single ultimate creative purpose. This purpose-to-create would be the ultimate end-in-view of the whole means-end, or teleological, system. It would be the *Logos,* the intention and meaning, of the whole life-process. It would constitute, not a static end, in which eventually the whole time-process would be consummated, but rather an ever increasing purpose in which finite lives would have their beginning and find their fulfillment, each constituting a fresh enrichment of the universal life, and in its fulfillment finding a place in the ever-growing eternal[11] consciousness.

This concept of God as the all-inclusive person in whom we, as finite persons, live and move and have our being, and with whom, in our religious and moral experience, we find ourselves in an I-Thou relationship, is constructed in univocal terms derived from the analysis of personal existence as we know it, using these terms to construct the idea of a form of personal existence, analogous, though vastly superior, to our own. It is the growth of modern knowledge of the structure of personality that has made possible this illuminating conception, so well adapted to both the biblical faith and the realities of religious experience. It is worth while to point to these facts of our rather recently acquired understanding of the nature of personal existence to see how they make intelligible that relation of man and God which faith has grasped and expressed in the biblical language of metaphor and myth.

A human being, or person, is a complex set of inter-related events and qualities which is, in turn, inter-related with that vast complex of events and qualities we call the world, or the universe. Within this whole persons and things are somewhat arbitrarily distinguished from each other, for each person and thing is in such intimate relation with its environment that it is constantly interchanging its constituent elements with the environment. The distinction between persons and things is that the former include a complex of events involving *observation* of other events, qualities

11. "Eternal" is used here, and in some following passages, in the sense of "without beginning or end," not in the sense of "timeless," or "beyond time."

and relations, *reflection* on them, and *efforts* to maintain or change them.[12] These events involving observation, reflection and effort we may call "intentional acts" or "interest processes" and a distinctly organized system of these events constitute a "mind" or "personality." A human body, as distinguished from its mind or personality, is a thing. Body and mind in organic inter-relation constitute a person, and the whole person is in organic inter-relation with the world or universe. Indeed, a person is the universe in organic inter-relation with a distinctly organized set of intentional acts or interest processes which observe more or less of it and make efforts to control certain features of it.

The term "person" therefore applies equally well to finite human persons and to God as the all-inclusive person. It is also intelligible how the personality of God may have ultimate unity, in that the vast complex of his interest processes is all an expression of the single, ultimate creative purpose, which is love, while yet his creative activity, his Spirit, may be immanent in all his universe and in contact with the finite minds of men. In the light of a faith in God, so conceived, we can also see how true is the Christian insight which saw in the self-less sacrificial love of Jesus Christ the operation and the manifestation of the eternal will and purpose, the Logos, of God.

The Reasonableness of Christian Mysticism

Even the mysticism of Christianity, with its faith in immortality and in prayer, becomes intelligible and reasonable in the light of our modern understanding of personality. We now know that the organized set of interest processes we call a human mind exists, for the most part, as subconscious, rather than conscious, activity. Its teleological continuity is rooted in the subconscious. Consciousness involves the reflective act of memory and, utilizing memory, is capable of those free choices and decisions which give new direction to the growth of interest process. In imparting this redirection to the physical organism interest process, apparently, releases energy stored in the brain cells, so that a prolonged period of conscious activity produces fatigue and induces sleep. Similarly, by an adaptation of nature, consciousness abruptly ceases its activity and consequent drain on nerve energy when the brain is temporarily injured by concussion or drugs. The brain, however, being a set of events of entirely different character from interest process, must not be thought of as essential to the continuity and activity, even the conscious activity, of the mind. It is simply a physical structure in which a delicately balanced energy system in the chemistry of the cells is peculiarly sensitive to the influence of mind over matter. There is therefore no reason why the mind, as an organized set of interest process ultimately derived from and rooted in the total world-structure of interest processes, the mind of God, should not survive the death of the body. The living body has functioned as a medium for the development of a unique, organized, set of interest processes, a human mind, having a place in history and the social order. But this mind, having once developed an organization of interests far transcending the original interests in the body and what can be done with it as an instrument in the physical world, need not cease to exist and function when the bodily instrument through which it first developed its individuality has ceased to be available to it.

12. Animals are similarly distinguished from things except that their minds seem to be incapable of reflection.

Awareness of the body and of the physical world is really but a small part of our awareness even in this life. We are aware of physical existence only in the sense of resistance found in experience when we make an effort to move. Sensation, almost certainly, belongs to the mind rather than the body, being a symbolic picture of the physical world which the mind creates for itself as a relatively simplified representation of the enormous complexity of the physical processes of the body and external world with which it is in interaction through its influence on the brain and its capacity to experience physical resistance. Beyond the physical world and the sensory pictures of it we create in our minds, we develop our major interests in the discovery of other minds and in intercommunication with them. It is true that this communication normally takes place through the physical medium and that death must deprive us of this. But recently developed evidence of telepathy[13] indicates that, even in this life, our minds are influenced directly by other minds. Our subconscious minds quite evidently transcend our bodies, as does

13. See especially, Soal and Bateman, *Modern Experiments in Telepathy* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1954).

the medium in which we create our sensory (especially our visual) pictures of our world. Our habit of attention to physical influences apparently blinds us to the subtler influence of the mental structure of the universe, of which our minds are but a small part, so that it is only some exceptional individuals who manifest a testable influence of telepathy, though, apparently, in exceptional circumstances, its influence may break through into the consciousness of anyone. When, however, we are deprived of the physical instrument to which our habits of attention are now fixed it would seem entirely reasonable to believe that we will become alive and responsive to the interplay of influences from the larger world of mind of which our minds seem, even now, to be a part. What new means of communication we then may discover, what new instruments of experience we may find to take the place of the bodies which have served the first phase of the development of our individually, and what new life we then may live, we can only guess. But that such a new life we will find it is entirely reasonable to believe.

The evidence for telepathy and other phenomena of parapsychology gathered by J. B. Rhine at Duke University, by S. G. Soal at the University of London, and by other workers in this field, also cast new light on our understanding of prayer. Thoughtful Christians have long found difficulty in the thought of prayer as a request to God for miraculous intervention with the laws of nature and yet have felt that it is insufficient to think of prayer as having only the subjective value of auto-suggestion upon the mind of the person praying. When we understand individual personality as having its subconscious roots inter-related with the structure of a world-mind, and ultimately with the eternal purpose in the mind of God, then prayer, as communion with God, takes on new meaning and is seen to be fraught with reasonable possibilities of value which other conceptions have not revealed to us. We can see, not only the availability of sources of spiritual strength from the direct relation of our personality with the divine, but also possibilities of prayer, if in harmony with the divine will, exercising influences of mutual spiritual aid between individuals. If to this concept we add our knowledge of the influence of the mental life on the health of the body we see possibilities also of the practice of prayer being a power to help those in need in many ways. Thus the Christian practice of prayer for those who are sick in body as well as in soul is

seen to acquire reasonable justification from modern developments of our understanding of personality.

In the light of this analysis of what it is to be a person it becomes clear then, that while the affirmations of faith go far beyond the demonstrations of reason they have no need to go beyond concepts that are reasonable. God, we may believe, is a Person, the all-inclusive and only complete Person. His true nature is revealed in the person of Jesus Christ and it is his Spirit that we feel convicting us of sin, calling us to repentance, and holding out to us the promise of the ultimate fulfillment of the potentialities of our being as moral personalities through faith in him. These convictions of the Christian faith can be stated in the language of the science of our day and in accord with our scientific knowledge. This is the language in which they must be stated in order that faith may be justified at the bar of intelligence for our day. But faith must also speak another language, the language of particular example, myth and symbol, which speaks to the human heart and is the language of all time. The gospel must be interpreted to the learned in the language of the science and philosophy of the day; and it is the task of present day theologians so to interpret it. But the gospel must be preached, as it has always been preached, in the language of particular example, myth and symbol, the language of the bible, the language in which we have learned how, for us and our salvation, the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

CHAPTER V

The Return to Authority: Traditionalism

A TURNING, OR A RETURN, to religion involves a turning, or a return to a church, or the creation of a new church. The religious life has its roots in privacy, in the innermost, secret places of the human heart where man is confronted by God, but it has its active expression in the inter-relationship of human beings, in their exchanges of ideas, services and goods. To cherish a religious faith in private is to stifle it. The love and service of God must find expression in the love and service of his children, and this service must include the testimony that gives expression to the faith that inspires it. Testimony requires common concepts and a common language. The expression in a common language of *religious* convictions—convictions concerning what is supremely worthy of man's devotion—challenges others to agreement or disagreement. Agreement on such convictions calls forth a response, initiates common action, generates common ends and collective organization to implement them. Disagreement, if it is still religious, calls for adjustment. If it is serious, or partly affected by irreligious motives, it may break the unity of the church. It may produce, and has produced, a multiplicity of disputing churches, each weakening the other. If it is not serious, and genuinely religious motives predominate, it may issue in variety of expression of a kind which may little hamper, and may even enrich, the collective expression of religious life. If it is both religiously motivated and serious enough to create conflict and mutual stultification of that life (and this is the measure of seriousness) then it calls for machinery of adjustment within the church, or between the sects, to mitigate the conflict. But in any case, the expression of a religious faith must seek and find the association of an existing church or create a new one. Man can no more be religious without a church than he can be social without the state. Religion must institutionalize itself or die.

INSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY AND FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE

It is here that authority enters into the religious life, for institutions are forms of collective action and collective action is impossible without the authority of either laws or leaders or both. The entry of authority, however, creates a profound problem, for religion is rooted, as we have seen, in that part of the human spirit which brooks no authority over it, the individual critical conscience. In that part of moral decision which is concerned with questions of fact (the existence of institutional laws, the consequences of action, and the desires of persons) conscience accepts authority which is believed to be reliable as a source of information. But, in that part which is concerned with the validity of ultimate ends, to be conscientious is to reject authority and act on one's own judgment. The conscientious judgment may be, and generally is, consciously and unconsciously influenced by views expressed by persons and books having various sorts of prestige, but it is of the essence of the conscientious judgment that it does not accept the mere fact of the existence and expression of views by any such persons as complete and valid grounds for a moral decision. Thus, however much the laws and leadership of a religious institution may be respected there is always possible a conflict between them and the conscience of the individual.

In any such conflict the requirements of the religious life are at one with those of conscience. Not to do what one believes one ought to do, or to do what one believes one ought not, is sin. It takes on this character of religious, as well as moral, evil because the religious concept of "God" is, by definition, the concept of a being supremely worthy of man's devotion. In terms of a personal deity the moral law is the will of God and to do what one believes wrong is to do what one believes is disobedience to God. To the religious man, therefore, to be true to conscience is to be true to God, to be false to conscience is to be false to God. In moral matters there can, for the believer, be no authority above his conscience because there can be no authority above God. He must recognize that his conscience may be mistaken, i.e., that he may be mistaken about what is the will of God. But he cannot believe that something is right without also believing that it is the will of God. He must therefore demand freedom from every institutional authority, whether

of church or state, to act in accord with his own conscience, his own conviction of what is the will of God.

Here then is the dilemma. The religious life must institutionalize itself or die, yet at its very core, it must demand freedom from every institutional authority to act in accord with its own conscientious conviction. The dilemma is not insoluble in theory, for there is an escape between its horns, but it is, in practice, often fraught with difficulty and uncertainty. The solution lies in the distinction between the duties of an individual for the execution of which he alone is responsible and the duties which can only be performed as part of a collective action. In the former case he must make whatever personal sacrifices are required for the fullest possible execution of the duty. In the latter case he must play his part in the collective action produced by the institutions of which he is a part. In the former case it is entirely his own responsibility to decide which of several possible lines of action will constitute the fullest possible execution of the duty. In the latter case responsibility for making this decision rests with the policy-making machinery of the institution and it must take into consideration the willingness of the members of the institution to follow the policy made. In such cases a conscientious member of the institution may think the policy adopted less than ideal, or contrary to the duties of the group. He is then faced with a choice of evils. He may refuse to play his part as a member of the group in doing what has been decided to be its duty. Or he may actively oppose the execution of it. Or he may play the part assigned to him while using whatever influence he can to improve group policy for the future. The first two choices injure the group and may lead to his separation from it. If they do then he must form a new group with new institutions or policies. This may be weaker than the former; and if he fails thus to institutionalize his concept of the faith it will die within him, or die with him. On the other hand, if he adopts the third possibility (of cooperation in a policy with which he more or less disagrees) he promotes a line of action which he judges wrong or, at least, unideal. Of the three evils he must choose the least, but the difficulties of this choice raise the problem of the place of authority in the religious life.

The claim to authority arises from institutions. Institutions are patterns of thought and conduct common to a group, and grounded and formed by the power of habit and custom. The state, for example, exists, not in land or buildings, nor in statute books, but in the minds of people, in the habitual pattern of their thought and conduct. So, too, of the church. Among other religious institutions are all those patterns of thought and conduct common to any religious group. The ministry consists not of the ministers but of the pattern of thought that recognizes their status and functions. The sacred scriptures are an institution because apart from a pattern of thought in the mind of the church a bible would only be printed paper. Language, including the special forms of religious language, is an institution, because, apart from the customary pattern of thought that interprets it, it would only be meaningless noise. Among other religious institutions are the sacraments, the creeds and the customary forms of worship.

To list these institutions, and to understand their meaning, is to see that their authority is real and insecapable. Almost every phase of life is subject to institutions, and even the religious life, in spite of its basic demand for freedom of conscience, cannot rightfully ignore them. Each institution, secular and religious, has rightful claims upon the individual, claims to fashion his conduct in certain ways. These claims rest upon the fact that it is only by the utilization, and therefore conformity to, institutions that we can do our duty to our fellow men. The rightful claims of institutions are, however, always specific and limited, and they leave open wide scope for freedom of choice. Good institutions enlarge real freedom more than they restrict it; and this is true of religious institutions and religious freedom no less than others.

Nevertheless, between claims of institutions and the freedom of the individual there are many points of conflict. The final arbiter of these conflicts must be conscience itself. The institution, being neither more nor less than a customary pattern of thought and conduct, is not necessarily right. Its authority rests on its value, which rests in turn on that of the functions it serves. And these values the conscientious judgment of the individual must assess. The difficulties of this, as we have already shown, are great.

The Authority of the Bible

Because of these difficulties, and because of the peculiar nature of *religious* institutions, the claim is often made for them that their authority is peculiar. It is urged that they are not merely customary

patterns of thought and behavior—that they are that and more—that they have become customary only because their form was first presented in divine revelation, so that their authority is that of the will of God, not merely that of the will of the group that upholds the custom. The claim is made by both Catholics and Protestants for the Bible, as sacred scripture, and it is made by Catholics for the church in the exercise of the functions of priesthood, especially in those of ecumenical councils and the pope. We shall examine first the Protestant claim for the Bible.

The claim we are examining is that the Bible is or contains a revelation of the will of God on principles of the moral life and on what the church ought to teach and practice, and so is a source of truth to which appeal may be made to decide questions on which there is conscientious difference of opinion. This must be distinguished from the much more tenable view that the Bible contains a record and interpretation of experiences in which certain servants of God found the will of God revealed to them, and that it therefore serves as a rich source of illumination to the conscience in seeking to know the will of God. The first of these views requires conscience to accept a verdict logically derived from the Bible; the second requires conscience to use the Bible to illuminate its search for truth.

The first view has a strong and a weak form. The strong form says the Bible *is* a revelation, the weak form that it *contains* a revelation. Each form has its own peculiar difficulties into which we need not go, for the basic objection to the whole view is the same for both forms. This objection appears when we ask how we *know* that the Bible, or anything found in it, is a revelation of the will of God that something should be done or taught. It is clear that we cannot know that something is the will of God without knowing that God exists. But if we know that God exists then religion is not a life of faith. The biblical and Protestant principle that "the just shall live by faith" is therefore incompatible with the view that we know, independently of faith, that the Bible or anything in it is a revelation of the will of God. The claim for biblical authority, in this form, contradicts itself. The claim must be made, if at all, as itself an expression of faith, not as based on independent knowledge.

Let us, then, examine this doctrine of biblical authority considered as an expression of faith, i.e., as a credal item in the Protestant

Christian faith. On what grounds can it be maintained as an item of faith? What, we may first ask, are the grounds for affirmation of the most basic item of faith—that of the existence and nature of God? We have seen that, since this is the affirmation of the existence of one who is supremely good, it must rest principally upon judgments as to what is morally good, i.e., upon judgments of the critical conscience. Any other affirmations of faith must therefore rest, directly or indirectly, to some extent, upon judgments of the same sort. It is therefore impossible that any affirmation of faith, being grounded in the critical conscience, can, of itself, show any other judgment of the critical conscience to be wrong, or that the critical conscience can properly accept any affirmation of faith as independent and sufficient ground for its own decisions. An affirmation of faith, whether in the existence of God or in a biblical revelation, is itself an expression of the critical conscience, and has no conclusive validity against any other well grounded expression.

The claim, therefore, that biblical authority may be appealed to to settle any question of conscience must be rejected, particularly as to questions of the moral law such as those pertaining to divorce, war, capital punishment and the rights of property. The doctrine of biblical authority, like any other affirmation of faith, can only be supported by showing that it is implied by sound moral judgments, or that the consequences of its acceptance are on the whole good. Such an argument must begin by assuming the soundness of the biblical answers to the very questions at issue. The doctrine of biblical authority on questions of morals must therefore be rejected as fallacious, for the only kind of argument that could justify its inclusion as a part of the Christian faith involves a vicious circle.[1] The proper use of the Bible in decisions on questions of morals is as a light to illumine conscience by the suggestions of its teaching and examples, not as an authority which conscience is bound to accept.

We pass then to the question whether the Bible may be appealed to as authority on what the church ought to do and teach on questions not specifically ethical, such as forms of worship and of church organization, and on metaphysical questions such as creation and the divine omnipotence. Here the first point to make clear is that

1. Note that what is involved here is not a *proof* of an item of faith but its ethical justification. Items of faith are beyond proof, but it is wrong to hold them if they are ethically unsound.

though these questions are not specifically ethical they may, nevertheless, have consequences of ethical importance. Forms of worship enshrine and cultivate spiritual values; church organization may fulfill well or ill the purposes for which the church exists; even metaphysical theories have overtones of spiritual consequence. If any question is devoid of ethical significance, i.e., is of no importance to the values of human life, it is, surely, one on which we should not expect God to make a special revelation to man. In so far, however, as questions of the kind referred to are of importance to human values, and thus have ethical significance, the position is the same as with questions of conscience concerned directly with the moral law. A justification of a faith that any particular form of worship or church organization or metaphysical doctrine is part of the revealed will of God must include a demonstration that its implications and consequences are of greater value to the life of man than any of the alternatives; justification of the faith that biblical injunctions, precedents and teachings on these matters are proper norms to be followed must show that this is the case with the biblical answers to all these questions. If the rightness or value of any teaching or practice of the church is in question it is therefore an argument in a circle to appeal to biblical pronouncements as authoritatively deciding the matter.

The conclusion therefore is inevitable that the doctrine of biblical authority on the teaching and practice of the church has no more validity than that of biblical authority on questions of the moral law. The whole doctrine of biblical authority must be abandoned as unjustifiable in the only way in which faith can be justified. Its assumptions are logically fallacious and its conclusions ethically unsound since they demand from conscientious inquiry an acquiescence it has no right to give. The doctrine of biblical authority must give way to that more tenable view of the Bible which sees in it a human record and interpretation of experiences in which certain servants of God found the will of God revealed to them. It must be used, not to put an end to conscientious inquiry, but as a rich source of illumination to conscience in seeking to know the will of God.

The Authority of the Catholic Church

We turn, then, from the Protestant claim to the authority of the

Bible to the Catholic claim for the authority of the church. This claim is a very special one and must be distinguished from two other sorts of claim. First, from the claim that any institution has, as being an established and effective pattern of thought affecting the lives of a group of people and constituting an instrumentality for collective action along certain lines. This sort of authority residing in any institution we have already briefly discussed in a general way. Second, the special Catholic claim for the authority of the church as a vehicle of special revelation must be distinguished from a broader claim for the church as a religious institution which we shall discuss later. The special Catholic claim is not made for the church as a whole but for the special authority of a priesthood established and transmitted by ceremonial forms, and claiming that in the papacy and ecumenical councils it has a special means for learning the will of God.

Most of the arguments advanced in support of this claim we have already rejected in showing (a) that the religious life must rest on faith, not on reason, (b) that the doctrine of biblical authority is not a justifiable article of faith. Further, the arguments which show that there is no genuine biblical support for the claim are so strong and familiar as not to need repetition. There are, however, other considerations which support the claim in the minds of those who accept it as an article of faith. These take the form of a belief in the need and value of a special revelation of a kind for which the bible is admittedly inadequate by reason of its variety and vagueness and confinement to past ages. It is urged that the church needs a ministry possessed of divine guidance as to what should be the content of its teaching and the forms of its worship and organization, that God in his goodness would not leave this need unsupplied, and that therefore the established ministry of the church must be believed to be possessed of this guidance.

The reply to this defense of the claim to authority in the ministry of the Catholic church must show three things. First, that the insights of faith on which there is agreement within the church are sufficient for the religious life. Second, that where there is disagreement a greater evil arises from the claim to authority for one point of view than would arise from liberty to pursue truth freely and experiment with different forms of worship and church organization. Third, that the claim to authority for decisions made within the

Catholic ministry is discredited by the fact that many of those decisions have been contrary to reason and sound moral judgment. In support of this third point we may instance the church's endorsement of persecution in support of its authority and the accumulation of dogmas affirming the miraculous which constitute a positive barrier to faith among intelligent and educated people, but adequate documentation of this point would require many volumes of print.

It would also require many volumes to document adequately the second point in our reply. The history of the church is replete with sad stories of the attempts of religious authorities to crush what was believed to be error but which time has revealed to be important spiritual insight. It may be admitted that, on the other hand, what was crushed often was really error, but it must be maintained that there is always a better way to meet error than by the assertion of authority, namely by the reasoned criticism of its grounds and the reasoned presentation of the alternatives in a spirit of love and respect for truth. Error thrives amid the passions created by conflict with institutions and between institutions. It gathers vitality from the personal and institutional pride that distorts the processes of honest inquiry. Truth, on the other hand, flourishes best in an atmosphere of full and free inquiry with mutual respect for both the integrity of the individual and for the tested values of institutional forms that have served man well in the past. In religion, above all, the individual human spirit must be left free to seek the leading of the Spirit of God in the search for righteousness and truth and to respond to the insights in which that leading appears to present itself, for only by responding to such insights can the integrity of the human spirit be maintained and the insights themselves be tested as to their objective truth.

Turning finally to the first point in our reply to the Catholic claim we have a fact of basic importance which has not always been fully recognized. Here we reject the alleged need for authority within the church by claiming that there always has been within the church a sufficient agreement on matters essential to the religious life at its fullest and best. What then are these essentials? The answer has been given in the earlier lectures of this series. We saw there that man's religious need—what he needs for the salvation of his soul and of the social order, for the perfecting of his personality, or to make his spirit whole—is that of a God to serve, a God supremely

worthy of his full devotion, a God the thought of whom can win his complete love and loyalty providing his heart is not wilfully closed against the thought of him, a God such love of whom will turn the heart of the believer away from the service of self and create in him an impartial love of his fellow men as children of God. Man, for his salvation, needs a faith in, and love of, such a God. And such a God is found in faith in the God and Father of Jesus Christ as a God whose Word to man, for our earthly life, is found in the person of the Christ of the New Testament. This is the meaning of the New Testament promise, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," and it constitutes the unquestioned core of the faith that animates Christ's church. No authority within the church is needed to enforce or further define this faith. It is expressed in many formulae, but it is the content of the faith, not the formula of expression, that meets the essential need. And the content of that faith is the finding of God, and the love of God, as revealed in the life of love of a person, Jesus Christ, whose image, left in the minds of those who knew him and found God revealed to them in him, is preserved for us in the Christ of the New Testament.[2]

A New Approach to the Authority of the Church

The reply to the claim for faith in a special function of the ministry of the church in this respect does not, however, constitute an adequate answer to the question of the authority of the church as an institution. Indeed, it only states for us the point of view from which the question of that authority must be faced. The church is a communion of the faithful, a community of individuals whose hearts have been touched by the love of God. As a communion of those whose hearts are thus specially open to the influence of the divine every individual moved by the same faith must join in its common witness to the faith, seek its recognition as a kindred spirit, and find in its organized life an instrument for collective action in those concerns of the faith which call for collective action. In brief, he must become a member of the church as an institution, and for those aspects of his religious life which require to be institutional-

2. It should be noted that the claim of Christian faith is not that this faith, as a whole, is *essential* for man's salvation (i.e., for the fulfillment of the ethical potentialities of personality) but that it is *sufficient,* i.e., that it *contains* all that, by way of faith, is needed for achievement of that end.

ized he must accept that measure of institutional authority essential to the unity and efficiency of the church's institutional life and work, so far as that life and work are consistent with the basic core of the Christian faith—the love of God as found revealed in Christ.

The authority of the church is therefore neither more nor less than the authority which every institution must exercise over those who participate in it, though it is an institution of peculiar significance as being the community of those whose minds and hearts are opened by faith to the influence of the divine—to what the church calls the Spirit of God. To deny this is to deny the faith. Loyalty to the faith requires its acceptance. But the limits of the church's authority are also the limits of the authority of the institution over the individual. It extends only to those aspects of the religious life of the individual which require to be institutionalized, i.e., those in which the expression of his faith is involved in collective action with others of the faith. Further it extends only so far as conformity to the institutionalized activity is essential to the unity and efficiency of the church's life and work. Finally, it extends only so far as that life and work are consistent with its basic faith, i.e., with the love of God as found revealed in Jesus Christ.

Where these limits to the authority of the institution actually lie must be decided in each case by the individual critical conscience, as guided by the Spirit of God and as illuminated by all the relevant facts that can be learned, including a study of the records and interpretations of God's will as revealed to servants of God in times past and preserved for our edification in the scriptures. From this ultimate responsibility of the enlightened Christian conscience of the individual in his relation with Christian institutions there can be no escape. Each problem must be faced as an individual problem, defined by its own peculiar circumstances. The church must always carefully avoid every appearance of exercising an authority which invades the sacred responsibility of the individual soul, face to face with God, seeking and deciding what is God's will for his life.

There are, however, some general comments which may be made concerning those features of Christian institutions upon which it is most clear that unity is needed; and with these we must close our discussion. The first and most obvious of these concerns the language and other symbols with which the faith is expressed and communicated. It is only by tradition and usage that words and other

symbols acquire the power to communicate, so the authority of tradition and usage must be recognized as decisive in the choice of words and other symbols by which to communicate and perpetuate the faith. Translations, of course, must be made from one natural language to another, but the new verbal forms must be chosen to express the same meanings. Religious language, as we have seen, is meaningful in the full sense. It is *practical* language, in which elements of cognitive and emotive meaning are employed together to give practical direction to life. Scholars must seek to preserve this full meaning of religious language in translation of the scriptures.

This language, the language and other symbolism of the scriptures, is the language and symbolism which must be used for the communication and perpetuation of the faith. This is the prime condition of maintenance of the unity of the faith. The invention of non-scriptural forms to be used as tests of faith, as has been done in the creeds of Christendom, is divisive and should be abandoned in the interest of Christian unity.[3] The essential content of the faith is expressed in familiar biblical formulae, such as "Jesus is Lord," or Peter's confession "Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God." These may be used for all the tests for which a verbal confession of faith is needed. They express the faith in a living God of such a nature that his will for human life is revealed in such a personality as the Christ of the New Testament. They contain the essence of the religious faith man needs. And they express in institutionalized form the faith that, from its inception, animates the Church of Christ as an institution.

Some would contend that a similar case, almost as strong, could be made for the ecumenical creeds. The creeds, however, are an attempt to exercise institutional authority in a sphere which should be sacred to the conscience of the individual, i.e., that of the intellectual implications of the faith. No man can honestly believe things that his own intelligence does not commend to him as credible, and an institution sins against its own members when it tries to use any other influence but that of intellectual persuasion to induce conformity in belief. It is different with that element of belief involved in the essential core of the faith—the belief in a God whose nature

3. For this reason any statements of faith and confessions recited or sung in worship should be couched in the symbolic language of scripture and should not be used as tests of fellowship or office.

and will are revealed in such a personality as that of Jesus Christ. This is the faith that is required to meet man's religious need—the need of a God who can win the full measure of his love and devotion—and it is sufficient for that need. It is the expression of this faith that creates the institution—the sharing of many minds in a common pattern of thought—and makes the individual a member of it. Belief, therefore, is here causally prior to membership in the institution, not causally dependent upon it. There is, therefore, no interference of the institution here with the free exercise of the individual intelligence and conscience in the shaping of belief. But thought must go beyond this essential core (which constitutes the institution) to work out its intellectual and ethical implications in relation to the rest of human knowledge and conduct. It is with these further questions that the creeds are chiefly concerned, and in solving these problems the intellect and conscience of the individual must be free if he is to be honest.

There is an obligation on the individual to respect and open-mindedly examine majority opinion, but he must be true to his own intellectual and ethical insight, and the institution must carefully refrain from exercising influences which would divert him from holding and proclaiming the truth as he sees it. The use of creeds as tests of fellowship, or as criteria of the right to teach or preach, is therefore a serious abuse of institutional authority. This does not mean that the institution must *support* the teaching and preaching of one whom the majority, or the constituted leadership, believe to be in error. It is entirely legitimate to deny to such a one the material institutional facilities to propagate his views. But he must be left free to think and teach, and to gather and organize what following he can, without being thrust out of the institutional life. This means that the church, however organized, must always be prepared to tolerate minority movements and sectarian groups within itself, and that minority movements and sectarian groups should not separate themselves from the larger community of the church so long as they are left free to follow their own conscientious convictions within it.

Authority in the Language of Symbolic Gesture

In addition to linguistic symbols involved in the confession of faith the church has other symbols by which its faith is expressed

and its membership declared and recognized. Far the most important of these are baptism and the Lord's supper, the one being the symbol of the church's acceptance of the individual into its fold, and the other the symbol of the individual's maintenance of his place therein. These symbolic gestures are the ceremonial language of mutual recognition of the individual and the group. Some such symbols of recognition, whether in words or dramatic gesture, are essential to the constitution of the group, the church, as a religious community, a group bound together with each other, and with God, in a spiritual communion, a mystical and practical unity. For this reason these two symbolic institutions have a place of unique importance in the institutional life of the church. Minds are only bound together by sharing in common symbols, and these symbols have become, by the church's adoption of them, the common elements of mental structure that bind the minds, or souls, of the Christian community into a union of the spirit with each other and with God. This they do, not by their form, but by their meaning, though the form is, to some extent, necessarily the bearer of the meaning.

Because of the mystical function and the practical importance of these symbolic forms great importance has been attached by the church to their proper performance and interpretation. Like every human custom they have been subject to inadvertant change both as to their form and their meaning, and some of the inadvertant changes in their meaning have led to deliberate modifications of their form and to changes of views as to who may properly receive and administer them. Thus it has come about that the symbolic forms by which the church expresses the unity of its spiritual life have become the very ground of certain divisions.

In considering the problem created by these divisions it is essential to remember that what we are concerned with in these symbols is a matter of language, of ceremonial forms which function as a means of communication. And in questions concerning language there are three considerations of prime importance. First, that the meaning intended by the verbal or other symbolic gesture may be the same while the symbolic gestures are quite different, and that the spiritual function is performed by the meaning conveyed whatever the form that conveys it. People may speak different languages, but, so long as each understands what the other intends to convey

by the form of words, or gestures, he uses, the spiritual function of communication, or creation of communion of spirit, is effected. Variations in the forms of the ordinances must therefore be recognized as not necessarily affecting the efficacy of their spiritual function. They will not affect its efficacy so long as the essential intended meaning is the same and is understood as the same, and so long as those who use different forms are *willing* to recognize the similarity of meaning in the forms used by others.

Even the complete abandonment of the symbolic ceremonial gesture and the substitution for it of a form of words, or the solemn silence of a Quaker meeting, may still constitute a symbol which performs the same essential function. It is therefore of the first importance to recognize that the omission of the traditional symbolic forms, or their modification in ways which may make them unrecognizable by large sections of the church, while it may destroy, more or less, the visible and practicing unity of the church, it need not do so if sympathetic understanding is exercised to recognize the essential similarity of intended meaning in whatever gestures are substituted for the original forms. Further, that the mystical efficacy of the substituted gestures will be the same so far as their intended meaning is the same, for it is the act of spiritual intention in expressing the faith in significant symbol that must be understood as bringing the mind of the individual into harmonious and effective contact with the mind of God, to whom all the languages of mankind must be the same. This equivalence of spiritual efficacy in the substituted gestures which express the intent of baptism and the Lord's supper is manifest in that the omission of these ordinances from the religious ceremonial of such a body as the Quakers is not accompanied by a loss of the spiritual power which comes from the exercise of the ordinances in communions which preserve more completely the traditional forms. It should be recognized, therefore, that, great as is the importance of the traditional ordinances, their non-performance or modification by certain sections of the Christian community does not constitute a breach in the spiritual unity of the Christian community with God, and that there is no good reason why differences of this nature should be allowed to effect a breach in the practical unity of the visible church of Christ on earth.

The second consideration from the nature of language that bears on this question is the fact that, since the function of language is

communication, it is highly desirable that the symbolic forms that bear the meaning should everywhere be the same. Differences in the symbols used are bound to create more or less misunderstanding. In particular, emotive meaning gathers around traditional forms, and unfamiliar forms fail to communicate it even though, intellectually, one may recognize that the unfamiliar form has a similar intent. Thus, although differences in the forms should not be regarded as basis for institutional division they are undesirable as causing partial failure in that function of the forms which is to create unity of the spirit. The Christian community should therefore seek to restore unity of form especially to those symbols whose function it is to express and communicate the reality of spiritual unity.

The third consideration from the nature of language that bears on this problem is the fact that the major consideration in questions as to the proper use of language is not that of original form but current usage; and, in regard to the symbolism of gesture, a secondary consideration is that of the suitability of the gesture to its intended meaning.

If we apply these considerations to the question of the most appropriate form of baptism we must set aside as of little moment all arguments as to its original form and give chief weight to considerations of contemporary usage and the appropriateness of the gesture to its meaning. Baptism is the symbol of the Church's acceptance of the individual into the communion created by the expression of a common faith. Clearly, of the various forms traditionally practiced, the burial and resurrection of the believer upon confession of the faith that gives new life to the spirit is the form most appropriate to this meaning. But the usage of a large portion of the Christian communion extends a preliminary recognition of acceptance to the children of believing parents upon the pledge of those parents to raise the child in the nurture of the Lord, and this preliminary recognition is later confirmed by another symbolic gesture of acceptance upon confession of faith. This usage should also be respected, for it certainly has its spiritual values additional to those of the immersion of believers, though it loses the effect of this dramatic symbol upon the believer at the time of his confession of faith.

Recognition of the significance of usage should create a willingness to admit either form by way of compromise, but, better than

compromise, it should create a desire in a united church to preserve the values of both practices. This could be achieved, without adopting the self-contradictory practice of two baptisms, by recognition, as is common among those who practice both infant baptism and confirmation, that the ceremony performed with the infant and that with the believer upon confession of faith are two parts of one ceremony symbolizing the acceptance of the individual into the communion of the church, the first premonitory and the second confirmatory. The first part could then include the ceremony of affusion and the second that of immersion. "Baptism" would then become the name of the ceremony of acceptance, or initiation, as a whole, including both parts if performed in two separate parts, and the formula of the first part could be "I dedicate thee unto baptism, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost," the formula of the second part being "I confirm thy baptism in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Thus the traditions that have grown in two separate movements within the church would be preserved in an enriched symbolism conserving the values of both usages and doing violence to the meaning of neither.

This suggestion regarding baptism may be taken as an example of the approach appropriate to problems of conflicting practice, where collective action is required and individual preferences, sanctioned by divided traditions, destroy the unity of action that is needed. The solution must always respect the freedom of conscience of the individual, and of distinctive groups, and at the same time it must recognize that, where collective action is needed, authority resides in the institutional procedure up to the point where freedom of conscience is transgressed. In matters of the choice of language and other symbolic forms the institutionalized tradition is, as we have seen, of paramount importance, and individual decision must give great weight to its authority. There is another point of dispute in the performance of the Christian ordinances in which, however, the authority of the institution must be recognized as strictly limited. This is the question of who may appropriately perform these ceremonies.

Authority in Church Organization

In order to guard their proper performance there has been a

tendency in the Christian church to limit the right of performance of baptism and the Lord's supper to certain appointed officials. This is a tendency, however, which, for the sake of freedom of conscience, must be stoutly resisted. Religious freedom can mean nothing if it does not allow that small groups of individuals, whose thinking differs from the majority, may organize themselves for teaching and worship in whatever way they conscientiously believe to be right, without being thrust out of the communion of the church in its spiritual and mystic union with God. This means that they must be allowed to perform for themselves, and in their own way, the symbolic gestures which declare their abiding in the faith and the reception of new members into the community of the faith. Such sectarian groups, working on their own and not cooperating with the majority, certainly constitute a certain weakness in the practical activity of the church, but the capacity to tolerate within its communion such independent movements is also a source of great spiritual strength. The freedom to think, criticize and act independently is essential to the integrity of the spiritual life, and those in whom the critical conscience is strong enough and active enough to impel them to independent lines of thought and action are often the source of movements that revitalize the flagging spiritual life of the majority. The church, therefore, misuses its institutional authority if it seeks to repress or cast them out. But, if they are to have freedom to develop their religious activity without separation from the main body of the church, then, acting as laymen, they must be recognized as having the right to perform the church's essential sacramental rites, and they must have the right, too, to ordain for their leadership a ministry of their own choosing.

This brings us, finally, to questions of church organization. Here we must stress two antithetic principles (1) the authority of the institution, in all matters where collective action is required, up to the point where the institution would interfere with the freedom of conscience of the individual, (2) the responsibility of the individual to act in accord with his own critical conscience while recognizing that, where collective action is required, the right action is not always the ideally best, but the best in which the requisite collective action can be maintained. The first principle means that the institutions of the church must allow freedom for individuals and minority groups to initiate movements of teaching and practice, involving

variant interpretations of the common faith in God as revealed in Christ, and to establish local congregations with varying degrees of cooperation and competition with the major organization. The second principle means that individuals and minority groups, while doing that which their conscience requires of them should not repudiate their spiritual unity with all those who share the common faith, nor should they refuse cooperation with the major forms of religious institution unless convinced that such cooperation would be fraught with more evil than good.

The decision as to the rightfulness of an institution, or of any particular case of cooperation with an institution, must be made on grounds of the ethical principles involved, including an estimate of the values and disvalues to be created by the institution and by cooperation with it. There can, as we have seen, be no appeal to the authority of revelation on such matters, for one must first exercise the ethical judgment—that what is alleged to be revealed is good or bad, right or wrong, before judging that it is a revelation from God. As the epistle of John says, we must "test the spirits whether they be of God" (I John 4:1). The test is the consonance of the alleged utterance of the spirit with the essence of the faith, and as applied to institutions this implies a judgment of the institution as an expression and instrument of love to God and man.

This means that the church in every age must regard itself as free to shape its institutions in whatever way seems best for the fulfillment of its task, the promotion of the kingdom of God on earth. There is no authority from the past to determine what form its institutions needs must take. The only authority is that of *existing* institutional forms which, as patterns of thought in the minds of a multitude, are instruments of collective action which largely determine what forms of collective action are possible and which of these is likely to be most effective for good. But, being patterns of thought, these institutions are not adamant. They have the fixity and the malleability that belongs to socially conditioned habits of mind. They are subject to change, but only gradually. They can be influenced by reason, but only slowly. Such as they are we must live with them. For the purposes born of faith we must use them and strive to improve them. So far as we conscientiously can we must serve them as serving the means that have been given us for the service of God.

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