

CHRISTIAN FAITH AND THE COMMON LIFE

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THE REVELATION IN CHRIST AND THE CHRISTIAN'S VOCATION

WE may begin with what must ever be the source and basis of the Christian judgment on any question, namely, God's revelation of himself in Christ and the call which comes through it to the Christian believer. We venture to set forth the following propositions as fundamental and generally acceptable to evangelical Christians, despite differences in emphasis and detailed exposition and interpretation:

(1) God is love. This is not the only thing that the Christian can say about God, but it is the only, or at least the most inclusive, thing that he can say about God's purpose in relation to persons, to men and women. By the word love we characterize, in a final way, God's activity as it is directed toward, and operates in, that system of personal relationships in which he has set men with himself and with one another. We may use other words to indicate certain partial aspects of God's inclusive relationship of love to persons, such as justice or righteousness, bounty, grace, etc., and these may be important for minds as prone to erroneous and sentimental interpretations of love as ours are; but the distinctive Christian position is that no statement, however incidentally useful to our feeble efforts to do justice to the richness and complexity of the truth, is admissible which in any way qualifies the proposition that God, in his relation to persons, is always and only love.

(2) The full and final revelation both of the fact that God is love and of the way of that love's working has been given to men in Jesus Christ. This is part of the central

imparts at least something of distinctive quality to his life despite its abiding sinfulness and failure. He is called to be sanctified through the Spirit in the fellowship of the church. The fruits of the Spirit are the virtues of Christ; the virtues of Christ are relationships with persons. This having of the mind of Christ manifests itself in two directions. On the one hand it is manifested in the building up of the unity of the Spirit within the Christian fellowship itself, which Christian fellowship has no class or national limits or boundaries. On the other hand it is manifested in the type of relationship the Christian, or the fellowship, enters into with those outside the fellowship — the world. Since in neither case the persons involved are free from sin, the believer's personal relationships will derive such distinctive quality as they may have from the constant reference of them to the supreme revelation, in the cross of Christ, of God's way of dealing with sinful persons. The believer's own sinful failures in love will be seen for what they are, needing every day the patience and pardon of God; the sinful failures of others will be seen in their true light, needing also the patience and pardon of God and calling for the believer's own costing endeavor that they, and he, should be redeemed into the true life of fellowship with God. Unless there is in the Christian disciple, in the sphere of human relationships, an increasing sensitivity, practically implemented, to the infinite demands of the love of God, to the shocking sin and tragedy of lovelessness, to the costly way, revealed in Calvary, which must be trod by God, and in some measure by those who know God in Christ, if the thing is ever to be set right, it is difficult to see what the specifically Christian vocation in human life really amounts to in the end. What do ye more than others? was a question not infrequently on the lips of Jesus.

In affirming these things the Christian is confident that

doctrine of the incarnation. The divine relationship to persons is present in, continuous with, wholly of the same pattern as — whatever phrase may be used — Christ's relationship with persons. The necessity for such a revelation arises from the sinfulness of man which blinds him to the nature and purpose of God and therefore to the nature and purpose of his own existence as a personal being. From the sinfulness of man arises also its tremendous force as the revelation of the divine love; or rather it arises from the redeeming, seeking, self-giving relationship to such sinfulness into which Christ enters. Hence the cross has always been to the Christian mind the supreme unveiling of the depth, character and method of the divine love to persons. The agony of the cross forbids any interpretation of the divine love and forgiveness as an easygoing condonation of sin. It forbids also any interpretation of it which would make it contingent upon the sinner's power to deserve or attract it. The divine purpose is directed toward the saving of a human person into its highest life simply because he is "there" and not because he is "so-and-so" — to use Brunner's phraseology.

(3) In the revelation of the divine love in Christ is given the divine standard of human personal relationships, that which men were originally created to achieve and are still under divine command to seek to realize, that which, in so far as they fail to seek or to realize it, condemns them as sinful, needing forgiveness. Sin as manifesting itself in the world of persons is lovelessness, and lovelessness is sin.

(4) It is the calling and privilege of the Christian disciple, in so far as he is truly a reconciled and forgiven person, to have increasingly in all his dealings with persons what it is not possible for the unreconciled man to have, namely, the mind of Christ. This is his vocation, and that which

he is stating, so far as words allow, certain basic actualities of the real world. This order of personal relations, to which his eyes have been opened by Christ, is really "there" with a constitution and structure which are what they are and whose consequences will be what they will be. It is part of the order of creation as much as the physical world is. To be wrongly related to it, therefore, infallibly brings trouble and confusion. So interpreted the Christian conception of "love" is a far from sentimental one. It is the only word we have for that final and constitutive principle of the universe as personal and as directed toward persons which has been manifested in the personal life of Jesus and, supremely, in what is at one and the same time the most frightful and the most hopeful event in the world of personal relationships, namely, Calvary.

Because this is how things unalterably are, there are no short cuts in the restoration and building up of right personal relationships when they have gone wrong. There is only the long and costly way of love and suffering, the way of the cross. The Christian, because he has himself been redeemed by suffering love, now knows — not by some sentimental *Schwärmerei* but by the inescapable compulsion of truth — that that is how things are and that he is under obligation to seek to tread the same way in his own dealings with men and women. Not for one moment must he take his eyes off Christ and his cross as showing him through all the fogs which rise like a miasma from the sinfulness and finitude of man, his own included, the real world. So doing, he is ready to claim that he alone is following a "real politic" and not a dream, that, indeed, it is the unregenerate, worldly, Machiavellian mind which is in bondage to illusion, subjectivism, and even sentimentality.

Unexceptionable, however, as these statements may be as indicating in a general way the distinctive insights and obligations of those to whom it has been given to know through Christ the real nature and purpose of personal life, difficulties arise so soon as the attempt is made to apply them in the actual situations with which history presents us. When we examine the actual created order in which human life has to be wrought out we do indeed find much to confirm and even to illumine and enlarge the fundamental Christian convictions set forth above. But we also find things which are exceedingly difficult to adjust to those convictions and which, in consequence, raise baffling problems for the practical life.

ASPECTS OF THE COMMON LIFE WHICH CONFIRM THE CHRISTIAN VIEWPOINT

In order to realize how much there is in the common life which confirms and illumines the Christian doctrine of love as the final meaning of our existence as persons, it is necessary to take a look at the meaning of love. This will also prepare the way for the line of thought we propose later to follow.

The obvious thing to say is that to love a person means to treat him always as a person and never merely as a thing. That, however, would hardly be illuminating were it not for the fact that, however elusive the concept of personality may be when the attempt is made to express its content in abstract terms, we know immediately in our own selves what it means to be a person, and we know immediately in our relations with others what it means to be treated as a person and not as a thing, or as a thing and not as a person. The injunction to do unto others as we would have them do unto us is, indeed, only admissible as a guide to moral action on the presumption that there is through immediate

self-feeling in human relationships an awareness which can always give content to the otherwise merely abstract concepts of "love" or "righteousness." Trusting, then, to this immediate self-feeling to justify the statement in at least a preliminary way, we may say without further argument that a human being is loved in proportion as he is grasped and affirmed as personal; per contra a relation of lovelessness always involves the disposition to, or the actuality of, treating a human being impersonally, that is to say, not as a person but as a thing.

Can we give this fuller meaning?

We may perhaps best do so by examining the difference between a personal and an impersonal relationship as these appear in an extreme form in one and the same experience. Consider, on the one hand, the relation of a scientist to the objects in his laboratory and, on the other hand, his relation to a friend whom in some real, if imperfect, sense he may be said to love. We note the following points:

(1) In the laboratory the object is treated as a case, an example of a class, for which any other object belonging to the same class could be substituted. There is a deliberate flight from the concrete, unrepeatable individuality to the abstract inclusive generalization. In friendship precisely the opposite is the case. It is the individuality which is prized and the more friendship deepens, the more true it becomes that there is no substitute. This is one reason why death is the frightful problem that it is in human life.

(2) In the laboratory the scientist is, in the exercise of his will, something of a despot; even though it be true that he can achieve nothing save as he submits himself to the facts, there is no intelligent will or purpose standing as an inaccessible check or limit to his own. He manipulates objects as he wills, and part of the motive of his activity is

the desire to be able more and more to manipulate objects as he wills. In friendship the exact opposite holds. Not only is the other man's will in fact an independent and inaccessible source of activity, but the fact is rejoiced in as that which gives the relationship its essential quality as friendship.

(3) In the laboratory the scientist has confidence as to the future behavior of the objects with which he is dealing because he believes that they are mechanically determined and act in strict proportion to the external environmental forces which play upon them. On the other hand, he has confidence as to the future behavior of his friend, trusts him, precisely because he believes that he is not thus mechanically determined by purely environmental forces. Directly the attempt is made to guarantee the other man's behavior by manipulating his situation, or playing on his fears, or exciting his passions, or deceiving him as to facts, personal trust as distinct from confidence in mechanically determined events has vanished, and friendship with it.

In the light of this illustration we may say that in proportion as a person is treated, not as an individual having a value and significance in and for himself, but as a case for which any other could be substituted—as a source of activity to be made subservient wholly and instantly to one's own will; as an object in whom no basis of confidence is sought, or believed possible, save as it is played upon by powerful environmental stimuli—so in that proportion the relation is impersonal, even though it be to a person; in that proportion it is loveless.

Is it then true to say that to treat persons thus impersonally is to run counter to a certain underlying permanent structure of the personal order, so that trouble and confusion must in the nature of the case result? The evidence that it is true is impressive and can be found not

only in immediate observation of men's reactions to one another, but also in the more careful explorations of psychologists, sociologists, penologists and others. One need only observe, indeed, the reaction of one's own spirit to any suspicion that one is being treated as a thing — as a case, as a mere instrument for another's purposes, as an object which affords no basis of trust save as it is controlled by threats or trickery or subterfuge — to know the truth of it. I am disposed to think, too, that the natural man has some perception of this essential structure of the personal order through what we call his moral sense, and that this perception finds expression particularly in the idea of justice and equality. Justice is a notoriously difficult concept for theoretical ethics, but in a dim and confused way it seems to mean something of the profoundest significance to the ordinary man. At the very least there comes to expression in it the resentment which the human spirit feels so soon as it is treated, not as a person, but as a mere instrument or thing.

Incidentally, these remarks indicate one reason why men are so prone to treat one another as things, namely the deep-seated self-assertion, egotism, power impulses of human nature. Psychology has emphasized this point also. In dealing with things there is no check upon the will by another will. Egotism and the impersonal are closely tied up with each other, and it is, I believe, not fantastic to say that the dominance of our age by impersonal laboratory science has considerably accentuated our problems in the sphere of human relationships. Science may teach men to be humble before laboratory facts; it teaches them nothing, rather the reverse, about being humble before persons. In the laboratory it is possible, as Aldous Huxley suggests, "to have all the fun of a dictator without any of the risks and responsibilities."

PROBLEMS AND DIFFICULTIES

To consider now that which raises problems and difficulties for the Christian doctrine of love:

(1) First there is the fact that there is what may be called a "thing" side to persons. Persons have bodies which are subject to the same forces which govern impersonal objects, and their relationships with one another are mediated through their common implication in a physical environment. Physical force is, therefore, an unavoidable element in the world of persons as we know it. This has two consequences: First, that in certain situations it is necessary to act primarily, and even exclusively, in relation to the "thing" side of persons, so that for the time being at least the relationship takes a quite unavoidable shift toward the impersonal, as when, for example, a surgeon operates on a succession of cases, or an air official calculates the weight of a load of passengers, or a madman in delirium is clamped into a strait jacket. This, however, raises no insuperable difficulty, provided the shift toward the impersonal is realized by those involved to be incidental and temporary and part of the inevitable physical conditioning of human cooperation.

Second, and much more important for our problem, where there is direct and unreconciled conflict of wills and the practical exigencies of the situation require a quick resolution of the conflict, the only method available, since wills are inaccessible sources of activity, is for one will, or group of wills, to achieve its ends through the physical conditioning of the other, or others, that is to say, through forces threatened or applied in one way or another to the body. The same necessity manifests itself from a different angle when we consider the part that subconscious, instinctive, irrational forces and compulsions play in the de-

termination of human conduct; in face of such forces the appeal of love and reason in a situation of immediate crisis seems impossible at any rate for the time being. Human persons, in other words, in so far as they are controlled by such obscure impulses and subconscious drives, seem to be in their essential psychological make-up partly of the order of things, and they have sometimes and in some degree to be treated accordingly.

The obvious example of this type of necessity in human relationships is the arrest and imprisonment of a lawbreaker by the police. Here the shift toward the impersonal, and away from anything that might even distantly point toward that fullest realization of personal relationship which we call friendship or fellowship, is obviously very pronounced, and the danger of running completely counter to the fundamental minimal necessities of true personal relationship is correspondingly great, especially as the egotistic power impulses of the human agent are almost certain in such dealings to manifest themselves.

That this is so and that the forces with which one is dealing in such relationships are extremely delicately poised is perhaps shown by the fact that physical force when it reaches its ultimate expression in injurious violence directly applied to the body, as in corporal punishment, is apt to be felt as degrading to a degree which is never forgotten and seldom forgiven. In the body the personal and the physical become as nowhere else organically and indissolubly one, and when violence of a direct kind is exercised upon it, the person is conscious of being treated as his body is treated, namely as a thing; he feels degraded and assaulted in the ultimate sanctities of his being. Psychologists are familiar with the dangers even of mere physical touch when dissociated from respect for the person, and the devastating effects of corporal punishment are equally well known. That the whole thing derives its quality

from the fact that it is a transaction in that dimension of being in which persons are bound to one another is shown by the fact that physical forces applied to the body by impersonal agencies, such as the forces of nature, are not reacted to in the least in the same way.

(2) Second, there is the fact that men are related to one another not only as individuals, but also as groups and through their responsibilities for and to groups. In so far as this is so, human relationships again take an inevitable shift toward the impersonal. For one thing, in action in relation to a group it is impossible to individualize, so that there is of necessity a merging of the individual in the class generalization similar to that which characterizes laboratory dealing with things; the relation becomes statistical. For another thing, the necessities of group life make it impossible to wait for the full cooperation of all the members of the group before action is taken.

So an apparatus of compulsion grows up having as its ultimate sanction force applied to the body. It is a mistake, however, to suppose that the cohesion of the group rests wholly, or even mainly, on this apparatus of compulsion. Indeed, in proportion as a group is held together by such forces — i.e., the greater the shift toward the impersonal — the more unstable it essentially is, precisely because it is the more thwart the real structure of the order of personal relations. A group held together by such forces is merely a boxed-up chaos. On the other hand, the more this unavoidable shift toward the impersonal in group life is being held in check and reduced, consent being sought and progressively substituted for compulsion, the case generalities of legislation being adjusted as far as possible, and even at some cost, to individual needs and situations, physical coercion of the lawbreaker being kept to a minimum and always directed toward his personal reformation and restoration, the more stable and harmoni-

ous and rich in personal values it is. Along these lines is to be discerned the essential and unchanging truth of democratic ideals, however little these may have been achieved by so-called democratic countries, and the essential untruth of fascism. History affords abundant evidence to show how fraught with trouble for men this movement of group relations toward the impersonal is, indicating once again that something structural in the order of persons is involved which cannot be defied with impunity. A special danger lies in the fact that in the group the egotistic and power impulses of the individual, which, as already said, always impersonalize their object, are given at one and the same time added power and the opportunity to disguise themselves under the forms of service and loyalty and self-sacrifice.

It is manifest that in these two inescapable elements in the created order in respect of the relationships of persons, namely, the physical conditioning and the group conditioning of personal life, there lies the possibility of shocking and disastrous maladjustment and failure, or rather, to speak from the Christian angle, the possibility of the gravest sin. The egotism, fear, cupidity, laziness of men are such that relationships fall swiftly into the grossest impersonalism, the more so as the plea of necessity lies so conventionally near to hand. This is particularly so where the physical force is put into action by groups against groups, as in war. The impersonalism which lurks in all use of physical violence on the one hand and in all group relationships on the other then combine into a frightful maximum.

THE PROBLEM FOR THE CHRISTIAN

We are now in a position to state in general terms the problem we have to face. The problem is: How may we

rightly relate what was said above concerning the Christian's specific and distinctive vocation in the world to these necessities of the historical situation and all the dangers of sinfulness they involve.

We have seen that a certain shift toward the impersonal is unavoidable in human relationships and that therefore that fully personal dealing which we call love is in varying degree impossible to achieve. The problem then is how in any given circumstances should the Christian conscience, from the angle of its specific calling and vocation, *evaluate that shift*. We might state the problem somewhat artificially thus: Suppose all human relationships arranged roughly in a scale of increasing depersonalization; is there for the Christian at any point in the scale a dividing line between the permissible and the not permissible, so that he is bound to say at that point, out of loyalty to his vocation, "Over that line I will not step, be the consequences what they may"? If there is such a dividing line, how is the Christian to know where it is and when he is being invited to step over it?

I presume that it will be generally agreed that there is such a dividing line somewhere. It is certainly possible to imagine depersonalized relationships which can be seen in advance of their ever happening to be so well over the line of the permissible that there can be no question that a final prohibition rests upon them for the Christian; thus a hard-pressed and conscienceless government might conceivably propose the torturing of prisoners in order to force the hand of a dangerous enemy at the gate. Indeed, I should suppose that the general ethical sense of humanity, altogether apart from anything specifically Christian, recognizes in general terms that there is a limit to the accommodations which may be made to apparent immediate necessities, even though it may be exceedingly hard to

know where the limit lies because of the complexities of human life and the corruption of human judgment by fear, cowardice and self-regard. That expediency is in principle opposed to genuine morality, that there is a sense in which righteousness must be done, though the heavens fall, would be admitted by most thoughtful consciences. The baffling problem, as we have said, is to know by what principles the Christian may know what is permissible and what not from the point of view of his distinctive equipment and calling as a disciple of Christ and a reconciled child of God.

It seems clear that this question is one aspect of the more general question, How does, or should, the Christian reach a judgment upon any moral question? This latter question, however, is in my judgment not in the first instance to be regarded as different from the question of what is the source of the moral judgment generally; for I should regard the specifically Christian insight into the values of any situation as arising from the cleansing and enhancement of that faculty of moral discernment which is distinctive of rational personality as such and is part of the original God-given endowment of mankind. F. H. Bradley has well stated the truth of the matter when he insists¹ that the moral judgment in the last resort is a matter of "intuitive understanding," meaning by this, first, that it is not discursive, i.e., is not reached as the conclusion of a logically demonstrable argument from premises; second, that nonetheless it rests on a wider basis than the impression of the moment, namely, the general spirit of the community by which the personality has been fashioned.

Transferring this to the Christian experience, the only difference — and it is an infinitely important difference — would be in respect of this wider basis on which the in-

¹ *Ethical Studies*, p. 194.

tuition of the moment rests. This for the Christian is the whole sphere of the Christian life as indicated in the opening paragraphs of this paper — the fellowship of the church, the means of grace, the indwelling of the Spirit, the life of prayer, the study of the Bible, etc. We must suppose that in so far as the Christian lives truly and sincerely in this sphere of things, he is given an increasing sensitivity to the real values of any situation and to what is God's will for him in regard to it. He develops a moral sensitivity or tact which has at least something of the distinctively Christ-style or Christ-mind in it. Somewhere in all moral decision the Christian has to come to rest in immediate intuition of this sort.

Thus to illustrate from the particular problem of this paper, if there is to appear for a Christian anywhere in our imaginary scale of depersonalized relationships an absolute dividing line between the permissible and the not permissible, it will be discerned by an intuitive judgment involving some sort of reaction of his whole personality as this has in its degree been fashioned by the Spirit of Christ. The judgment will express a profound feeling or "tact" response beyond the reach of theoretic justification or propositional statement. He will have to say that he just knows that the limit of accommodation to the impersonal in human dealings has now been reached and that beyond it he must not go whatever the consequences may appear likely to be; and he will be bound to affirm, in so far as he is in earnest at all, that such an immediate and inarguable knowledge is not the outcome of his own unaided, solitary reflection, but is the veritable word of God to his soul in Christ.

But directly we take note of this quite unavoidable element of intuitive and nonrational immediacy in the Christian, as in all moral judgment, we are confronted by diffi-

culties. On the one hand it is clear that grave questions of Christian conduct cannot be left to the impression of the moment. The dangers of that are obvious and need not be detailed. The Christian is under obligation to examine and check in the light of the wisest witness of experience to which he has access the compulsions which appear within his conscience, lest he mistake his own predilections for the will of God; and in particular, he is under obligation to share his mind as fully as possible with other members of the Christian fellowship. It is precisely by such interplay that his education into Christian tact and insight, through the Spirit, takes place.

Yet, on the other hand, there is hardly less danger in entering into argumentation and discussion about what at first seems to be given with a high degree of moral certainty. If there is danger in "hunches," there is danger also in sophistications, rationalizations, concessions to majority opinion, and so on. Bradley, in the passage just referred to, gives considerable weight to the general belief that in the moral sphere "to try to have reasons for all that you do is sometimes very dangerous. Not only the woman but the man who deliberates may be lost. First thoughts are often the best, and if once you begin to argue with the devil you are in a dangerous state." This danger may be illustrated from the way in which the arguments brought forward in support of a moral judgment are usually infinitely more convincing to the person who has already made the moral judgment than to the person who has not; that is to say, their power to convince is not intrinsic — support is being all the time surreptitiously borrowed from that to which support is supposedly being given. The dangers of crooked thinking and self-deception here are obviously great, and it is a sound instinct, as Bradley suggests, which makes the common man suspicious of a moral position

which seems to require an elaborate scaffolding of argument to support it.

That the power of an argument to convince depends on the extent to which the position under discussion is already held may be illustrated in an extreme form by the difficult question of the extent to which the estimation of probable consequences should enter into the determination of Christian conduct. Take, for example, the problem of the Christian's participation in war. The Christian pacifist who finds within his soul as absolute a moral revulsion from modern warfare as he would from denying his Lord is bound to treat the discussion of possible consequences to himself or to his family or to his country of his refusal to participate in it as somewhat of an irrelevance. Nor is this necessarily a refusal to think the matter through. Rather it is the result of a clear perception that in the nature of the case the conditions for thinking the thing through are, so far as future consequences are concerned, not to hand. For the estimation of consequences is merely the natural reason calculating probabilities upon data drawn from the past, mainly unregenerate, experience of the race.

Such calculation is precarious enough in ordinary worldly affairs, but when, *ex hypothesi*, it has to do with the redemptive purpose of God operative in the world through those whom he has called to be his agents — when, that is to say, it has to do with a factor transcending history and man's natural understanding — it becomes quite impossible and therefore irrelevant. Doubtless the pacifist would maintain that in the end the consequences of doing the will of God will be the best for everybody concerned despite all that it may immediately entail of tragic suffering, and he may not illegitimately point to such indications that this will be so as past history and general experi-

ence may afford; but in the main it will be a judgment of faith resting on the prior moral conviction that modern war and discipleship to Christ cannot be yoked together. On the other hand, to the Christian who does not feel such an absolute moral revulsion of his soul from modern warfare, though regarding it as a very great evil, the all-determining consideration must be an endeavor to estimate amid all the complexities of modern life the probable consequences of using such methods or not using them in any situation that may arise. Thus the two lines of thought seem constantly to go past one another without ever meeting, and after all the argument both sides are left wondering at the apparent insensitiveness of the other to what seems to each utterly obvious and convincing.

SAFEGUARDS

What then is to be done to save the Christian judgment from being on the one hand a merely impressionistic and individualistic feeling-response and on the other hand a judgment according to the natural values of men brought into apparent harmony with the mind of Christ by elaborate and subtle argumentations? Obviously nothing will save any individual Christian from the necessity of making up his own mind, or from some admixture of error and self-deception in doing so. To believe in the guidance of the Spirit is not to believe in the availability of an infallible moral ready reckoner. But at least two suggestions may be offered which shall act as pointers or direction posts.

(1) First, the Christian is under obligation to seek to penetrate beneath any profound compulsion of conduct which he cannot escape to underlying principles which can be seen to be part of the whole structure of specifically and distinctively Christian living.

This would seem to be the only right way in which prin-

ciples should determine conduct. They should not be laid down in advance and slavishly and woodenly applied, but rather should be continuously forming themselves along certain lines of organic consistency within the process of Christian living itself, even as the skeleton is deposited in the living body which it helps to keep firm and erect. To try to see whether there is such an underlying structure in the life, and if so, what its main lines are and how it conforms with the revelation given in Christ, is at least a protection against a momentary and impressionistic emotionalism which makes any solid consistency of character impossible. The profound significance of the instant feeling-reaction of the Christian mind to a situation must indeed not be in any sense minimized—it is a very important datum, perhaps the most important datum for the final determination of conduct, and if it remains unimpaird after every consideration, it must be obeyed; but we have no right to obey it without first seeking to discern so far as we can its structural consistency with a whole style of life which has something distinctively Christian in it. It is perhaps not unimportant to point out that this process is quite different from what is usually called rationalization, though in one sense, inasmuch as it is an attempt to relate feeling to reflection, it may not inappropriately be called by that name. Rationalization in the bad sense means an attempt to escape the monitions of conscience by spreading over them a web of argument; the process we are thinking of is rather an attempt to plumb their depth.

Perhaps I may be permitted to illustrate this again from the issue of the Christian's participation in war, not because I wish to turn this paper into an argument for my own position, which is that of pacifism, but because that is an issue before all our minds and because it presents us with our problem in a particularly clear form.

As a pacifist I realize that the profound revulsion from

all that modern warfare entails, so that I feel I cannot yoke participation in it with my calling as a Christian, is not in itself sufficient to justify an absolute refusal. Nor is it sufficient that the position should be justified on the ground of Scripture texts, for these are susceptible of various interpretations and in any case are merely external injunctions requiring internal validation; nor on the ground that war is a stupid way of settling disputes, for that is a purely natural judgment, and though war is certainly stupid, there may not be available, so far as the natural judgment can see, a better way; nor on the ground of an absolute valuation of life, for that men should die is *per se* of no consequence — they die every day and death is part of the order of creation. None of these considerations go deep enough or reveal the sort of internal structural principles which we have in mind and which should be in process of formation in any distinctively Christian style of life. So far as I can judge, the only satisfactory deeper ground of this kind for the pacifist position is along the lines previously indicated in this paper, namely, that modern war when it is examined is seen to involve such a total depersonalization of human relationships that it cannot be yoked to the Christ style of life at all. It represents a cul-de-sac, a no-thoroughfare in the dimension of personal relations down which in the nature of the case a man cannot walk with Christ.

Some depersonalization, we have seen, is unavoidable in human dealings; and however great the degree of depersonalized dealing which a situation may seem to demand, a Christian may have to participate in it, provided he can do so without completely wrecking and obscuring the whole distinctive structure and style and witness of his life as a follower of Christ. But if so far as he can judge this is impossible, then he is under obligation to Christ to re-

fuse; his first utter revulsion is now seen in the light of its deeper underlying meaning to be justified. That war closely approximates to such a *ne plus ultra* of depersonalization, i.e., of evil, will hardly be questioned; whether it finally reaches that status can only be left to the individual conscience to judge as best it can. Certainly it is difficult to conceive of a use of force which (a) is more wholesale, undiscriminating, in the mass; (b) more completely excludes the possibility of any accommodation to, or from, the will of those to whom it is applied, for it aims with the help of every available mechanical invention at the maximum effect of blind force, namely, the complete smashing out of existence of the whole organic body-spirit unity of the person; (c) more unavoidably demands as indispensable to its prosecution, on the one hand, the repudiation of the basic requirements without which anything in the nature of truly personal relationship cannot even begin, such as truth and candor, and on the other hand, the manipulation of the psychological processes of the other man by any available trick of terrorism and propaganda; (d) more completely reduces the human agents involved from the level of self-directing persons to the mechanical level of the physical forces they are putting into operation, depriving them of rights of conscience against those in command. And all this it does necessarily. To imagine that it is possible to wage modern war and not be involved in this sort of thing is sentimental illusion.

(2) Second, it may be suggested that a Christian must seek to keep dominant in his mind the sense of his special vocation in Christ. He must seek to keep dominant in his mind his calling and ministry as a redeemed man who knows through Christ the real order in which God has set mankind, and is appointed to be himself in the spirit of the cross under God at all times a reconciler and an agent

of the Kingdom. This involves the principle that all other offices, callings, responsibilities must for the Christian be subordinated to the one supreme vocation which has been set forth above.

The importance of bringing to any issue a mind dominated by the sense of the Christian's special vocation is threefold:

(a) To keep dominant the sense of one's specific vocation as a Christian helps once again to preserve the moral decision from being a merely temperamental, impressionistic, and momentary reaction to the situation. For it sets it in the most solemn manner in the context of the calling of God upon the whole life in all its outward relationships and inward springs. Thus, if we may be permitted again to use the example of the war issue, a pacifism which is not part of a transformation of all values, a sacrificing witness over the whole breadth of one's living against everything in the common life which is in its values and motives of the same order as war, cannot rebut the charge which is often brought against it of being an immoral and undedicated sentimentalism. Yet equally much of course to participate in the admittedly shocking evil of war because the emotions of the moment are stirred over some international outrage or some threat of invasion may be open from the Christian point of view to the same charge. Again, to set the moral decision steadfastly in the context of this all-inclusive Christian vocation is to be protected against any temptation to a mere supineness in the face of evil, either by way of "contracting out" of a sinful situation or by way of "contracting in" in such wise that one merely merges oneself — doubtless with the support of all kinds of specious arguments — for the time being in the ordinary sinful courses of humanity and anything in the nature of specifically Christian witness is lost. The charge against

pacifism that it is "passivism" may in some instances be well merited, but it can equally much lie against some Christians who are prepared to go into war, for their activity may mask a latent inactivity in relation to certain issues vital to the Christian witness. The protection in both cases against this danger is the resolute endeavor to subordinate the whole life to the Christian vocation.

(b) To keep dominant the sense of the special calling of the Christian helps to set in a right perspective certain factors in human life which are otherwise exceedingly difficult to evaluate.

Thus there is the problem that so much of human behavior seems to be conditioned by what has been called subpersonal factors. That the presence of these factors in human life contributes to the unavoidable shift in human relationships toward depersonalization has already been recognized above. It may be asked whether the fact of these dark, inscrutable, subpersonal forces in history does not involve that there may be no limit whatever to the extent to which a depersonalized dealing with men may be necessary at least as a temporary measure of control, so that to refuse to go even to that extreme of depersonalized dealing which is modern war becomes a sentimental and unrealistic optimism, a premature attempt to leap into a kingdom of love and sweet reasonableness in a world which it must be supposed God has not made immediately ready for it.

How are these factors to be evaluated from the point of view of the Christian vocation and conduct? It seems that in the nature of the case, as the terms in which we are compelled to describe them indicate, they cannot be evaluated in any final way at all, certainly not sufficiently to shed much light on the problems of Christian conduct. We are not in a position to say what these subpersonal

forces mean or how they are related to the working out of the divine purpose of love, revealed in Christ, in the world or beyond the world. They are part of what has been called the senseless side of history and they are capable of any number of different interpretations by the natural reason. The Christian therefore is thrown back upon his awareness of having through God's revelation in Christ a special vocation of sacrificial witness amid the dark inscrutabilities of the historical process, a vocation which under no circumstances can he allow to be completely submerged. He is not called upon to explain all the mysteries, or to justify in terms of the apparent immediate expediences of human life that to which he feels under compulsion to bear witness in word and deed. He can only say that out of the heart of this dark mystery and confusion of existence there has come a revelation of its ultimate meaning; yet it is not a revelation which provides a complete and tidy philosophy of existence, but rather calls to an obedience and trust come what may.

One thing he must be exceedingly careful about, and that is that he does not take refuge under these inscrutabilities from the exigencies of God's call, interpreting them arbitrarily in any way that suits and for which there is no real warrant either in reason or in the Christian revelation. Thus, for example, the assertion sometimes made that these dark forces of human nature, whether through human immaturity or through sin, are such that in certain circumstances there may be no way whatever of dealing with them save through the frightfulness of modern war, is to make a dogmatic assertion for which there is no conclusive evidence and to the formation of which specifically Christian insight has contributed nothing. It may well be argued that such a method merely releases the elemental passions of men, or if it controls them, merely drives

them underground, whence they reappear sooner or later with even more sinister power. Similarly, I cannot help feeling that much current teaching about demonic forces and the depravity of human nature is without any satisfactory basis, and is in great danger of becoming a mythology under cover of which there is an unwitting flight from the vocation of meeting even the worst depravities of man in the way of the cross and in the faith that love though apparently weak is the power of God against evil.

Similar considerations apply to the question of seeking to conserve distinctive national and race cultures and civilizations. That the Christian is called to live his Christian life in such wise that he helps to foster and maintain the specific culture of his own nation, need not be questioned. But when it comes to the evaluation of such culture in terms of the final values of the Kingdom of God, which the Christian is called upon here and now above all things else to serve, we pass again into the region of the inscrutabilities of history, indeed into the region of the ultimate inscrutability, which is why the establishment of an eternal kingdom should necessitate a time process at all. I cannot conceive or imagine what the works of Shakespeare or the symphonies of Beethoven mean for the consummated trans-historical divine community of persons. Is the Fifth Symphony played in heaven? Is there a counterpart of Greek or Cretan or Anglo-Saxon or German civilization in the kingdom? Nobody knows. Nor do we know what part God means these things to play even in this present scene of history altogether apart from any transcendent reference. Is British civilization so precious in God's sight that he requires me to blow yellow babies to bits in order to preserve it from a Japan which, incidentally, is equally convinced of the supremacy of its own cultural life and destiny? Natural instinct says yes, cooler reason says "I

haven't the least idea," the Christian conscience surely finds the proposition faintly ridiculous. Nor do arguments from past history help much, for the past is just as inscrutable as the present. If Charles had not defeated the Moslems at Tours by armed force, would that have been the end of Christianity in Europe? Who knows? We are here back in the precarious estimation of consequences again, only here it takes the form of trying to estimate what would have happened if something which did happen had not happened, an estimate which in the nature of the case, as pointed out above, leaves the prime factor in the situation out of account, namely, the manifold wisdom of God. The Christian therefore is thrown back upon his sense of having, amid the inscrutabilities of history, a *special* vocation which he must seek to fulfill, leaving the rest to God.

Similar considerations, again, apply to the view sometimes expressed that it is the first duty laid upon the Christian by the law of love to seek to preserve the general frameworks, or "orders of creation," since if they collapse the indispensable basis of service to, and fellowship with, one another disappears. In a broad sense this is true, but it affords no real guidance on the particular problem which is the subject of this paper, the problem, that is to say, of knowing where lies the limit of conformity with what the merely natural judgment declares to be expedient for this or that established system or framework of the common life. For, plainly, it is open to a Christian who finds himself confronted with a proposal to do in the alleged interest of, say, the order of the state something against which his whole being rebels as totally contrary to the mind of Christ to maintain (a) that it is given to the Christian through the revelation in Christ to know as none else know what the basic structure of personal and community life is, namely, that it is of such a nature that such an utter re-

putation of the mind of Christ, in attempting to preserve it, would in fact destroy it; (b) that it is possible to take upon ourselves too much responsibility for the preservation of the frameworks of life, to attempt to play providence to our own affairs, and in general to display an irreligious solicitude for God. In the last resort, it might be said, it is God's business to preserve human life and whatever is indispensable to it; it is our business to do God's will, committing everything else to him. Nor would there be any means of showing such a position to be wrong, even though it might in fact be so. Hence it cannot be held that a general principle about preserving the orders really affords any guidance as to when and where the Christian may have to make the kind of final stand we have been discussing. At the most the principle expresses something which ought always to be considered in forming a judgment, though it cannot by itself be finally determinative of the conclusion reached.

(c) Finally, to keep dominant the sense of one's special calling in Christ protects the Christian, in his refusal to participate in certain aspects of the common life, from the uneasy sense of leaving others to do the necessary or, as it is sometimes put, the "dirty" work, and profiting by it.

The Christian certainly should not let such a feeling go unexamined, but on the other hand there is a danger of allowing it to deflect him from the path of God's will for him. The important distinction between God's agent and God's instrument is here relevant. The Christian is bound to believe that he is called through the revelation he has received through Christ to be in a special sense God's agent in this so sinful, shadowed, and terribly complex world, that he has in the mysterious providence of God insights and powers and responsibilities of witness not open to others. But that does not mean that he, and with him other Christians, are the only people God uses in his total grasp

upon human life and in the full working out of his purpose in history; others also he uses, if not as his agents, then as his instruments. Nor in the nature of the case can the Christian who is called in a special way to be God's agent fail to be benefited in some degree by those whom God can only use as his instruments, benefited too by activities from which by virtue of his special calling he feels bound to withdraw. Thus a Christian who at the beginning of last century was convinced of the fiendish wickedness of hanging terrified children for stealing apples would have been under obligation to refuse the office of magistrate, even while admitting that magistrates are necessary, even usable by God, and in a sense benefiting by the general system of law of which magistrates are a part. Similarly, a Christian pacifist might not inconsistently feel that a war waged by a league of nations on behalf of a nation wantonly attacked is on a higher moral plane than most other wars, and yet refuse, in virtue of what he believes to be his special calling as a Christian, to take part. He is surely entitled to believe that God in the manifold wisdom of his providence might use both a non-Christian league of nations dimly glimpsing and seeking a better order through armed force, and the Christian refusing to participate and seeking to contribute to the total sinful situation in some other way more consonant with the unique insights and powers which he is bound to believe God has seen fit to bestow on those whom he has redeemed through Christ. In so doing, he is not fairly accused of leaving others to do the dirty work, provided only that he does not stand aloof from it all, but himself seeks to enter costingly into it. What he does do is simply to recognize that in this chaotic and tragic world God has many ways of fulfilling himself and can make even the wrath of man to praise him.

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