

THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

ESSAYS IN EXPLANATION AND DEFENCE

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brought face to face with God, and made conscious of a need that is far more than physical. He needs forgiveness and he needs redemption. "Against Thee and Thee only have I sinned" . . . "Thou must save and Thou alone." Unless the Creator is also the Redeemer, we are lost men and women; this is what Luther meant when he said, "The Word that has created the heavens and the earth must do this, or it will be left undone."

THE CHRISTIAN GOSPEL OF REDEMPTION

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VIII

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There are three dark shadows that fall across every human pathway—death, suffering and moral evil. Each of them is what it is because man is not only a physical organism but also a conscious self. If man could be regarded, and could regard himself, simply as a biological unit, death would be as natural as birth, the suffering of disease or accident would be the misfortune of an organism capable of pain because capable of pleasure, whilst there would be no such thing as moral evil. But every man is a conscious self indissolubly linked within his present experience with a body. He is a self so capable of cherishing lofty dreams and purposes, so conscious of belonging to a world that protests against slavery to death and suffering, that instinctively he cries for deliverance from these tyrant masters. Most men also, in most generations, become conscious of a tyrant more to be feared, because he rules from within through purposes of the self which are traitorous to its best hopes and truest aims. This is the moral evil which religion calls "sin". It is more than the physical passions and desires with which it is largely interwoven, and it is regarded by the man himself as something for which he is responsible, something that *ought* not to have been and *need* not have been, had the true self chosen the better part. This consciousness can never be wholly eliminated by our evasions and excuses to others and to ourselves.

Every religion worthy the name must offer some sort of deliverance or "redemption" (in the widest sense of the word) from these three tyrants, and the quality of the religion is seen in the kind of deliverance it offers. The

religion may seek to persuade the man that either his self or the world about him is an illusion; or it may nerve him to a "stoical" endurance of the common lot; or it may promise him (on certain conditions) a happiness beyond death more than compensatory. It is characteristic of Christianity, because it was cradled in a religion unique in its moral demands, that all its emphasis is thrown on emancipation from moral evil. Apart from that emancipation it has nothing to offer; with it there goes the power to transform suffering from loss to gain, and the promise of a deathless life already begun here. (We may contrast the Indian emphasis on redemption from suffering and the Egyptian emphasis on redemption from death.)

Let us try to frame, in broadest outline, the Christian Gospel of Redemption as we may find it in the New Testament. The New Testament itself has more than one way of putting it, but Paul's way is the richest and most suggestive in detail, though it is by no means a fully wrought-out system of theology. In his most important epistle, that to the Romans, the true starting-point is to be found in the seventh chapter, when he portrays that perennial fact of our human consciousness, the divided self. There is a struggle between the higher and the lower, as in the overture to Tannhäuser or Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, and we hear the cry "O, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" The answer is "Jesus Christ", by which Paul means not the teaching or the example of Jesus whilst He lived on earth, but a new spiritual dynamic which reinforces the spirit of man and makes possible the impossible. That dynamic works in man so far as he identifies himself by "faith" with the risen Christ. It gives him a present moral victory. It enables him to face the greatest suffering in a joyous and triumphant spirit. It declares

that death itself cannot separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. All this for Paul is based on a great redemptive work wrought in the historical Cross of Jesus Christ. There can be no doubt that this has been the experience of a great multitude of men and women through nineteen centuries, as it was for Paul himself. But here rises the first and most general objection of the modern man. As we may hear him say in so many words, "This is a beautiful dream. It works, so long as you can persuade yourself to believe it. But who can, when he remembers the mind's trick of objectifying its own dreams? After all, Paul is not offering us even the historical Jesus, but a phantom Christ, whose death he has interpreted by a whole host of outworn forms of Jewish and Hellenistic thought sublimated into a Christian mythology." We cannot possibly meet so radical an objection as this by an appeal to authority, even authority in the very respectable form of experience through nineteen centuries. All that we are entitled to say is that a faith which wears so well and has been so widely tested is at least deserving of more respect and attention than it gets from so many in the present generation. After all, faith must always be directed towards the unseen, as the Epistle to the Hebrews reminds us. That is no disqualification of faith, which deals with intangibles because it is precisely those intangibles which most press upon us. If we knew for certainty that death was a negligible incident in our career, if we could successfully ignore suffering, if we could eliminate the self-rebuking conscience as a socially begotten illusion, then we could reasonably dismiss religious faith as equally unreal and certainly unnecessary. Faith always takes us beyond sight; that is its *raison d'être*. In doing so, it must of necessity use the forms of contemporary experience and thought, or it would not be even intelligible. It is no objection that the

Pauline Gospel is expressed in ancient forms of thought derived from the Apostle's personal life and his social and religious environment. The real point at issue is whether the Christian faith (1) meets a real and permanent need in offering the forgiveness of sins; (2) provides a real and necessary redemption from moral evil and its consequences; (3) derives a genuine moral dynamic from this religious redemption; (4) obtains redemption from suffering and death.

(1) Does the Christian Gospel of Redemption, then, meet a real and permanent human need, when it promises the forgiveness of sins, and puts this first and foremost in its programme as the primary necessity? That question can be answered briefly, since it has been faced at length in the previous chapter of this book, where it was seen that "sin" is not a subjective illusion, encouraged by religion that it may thus heal the (imaginary) disease it has fostered, in the manner of the advertisements of some patent medicines. "Sin" is the religious name for the great and universal fact of moral evil, which is at the root of most of our distresses. That fact has witness borne to it by history and literature, by law and conscience. We hold ourselves, and we hold others, to be responsible for evil choices, and by public and private means every society seeks to restrain or prevent those evil choices. Moreover, both from within the conscience and in social judgments from without we regard that responsibility as extending into the past, even though the present attitude is changed and the evil act would no longer be done. The whole structure of personal life and social intercourse depends on this continuity of the self of today with the self of many yesterdays. Every one of us who is frank and honest with himself knows that he carries the burden of a whole series of evil acts, for which, in greater or less degree, he and he alone is responsible. As events of the past, they

are irrevocable and unalterable. His present self may disown them, but they remain *his*, in a sense in which they are no one else's. The proper name for this responsibility is guilt. Moreover, no one can think about the course of his own life without seeing how closely it has been bound up in "the bundle of life" with other lives, both for good and for evil. He sees that a particular sin, that has become a habit sapping and destroying his happiness and usefulness, goes back to the evil example or direct incentive of another, and he realizes that his own unconsidered example or influence may equally have helped to spoil other lives. The chain seems unending; the fatal inheritance of evil through social life makes it practically, if not logically, certain that every individual will be exposed to, and will sometimes yield to, the temptation of this evil environment. For the consequences to others as well as for those confined to his own life, the honest man will accept his own measure of responsibility. The plausible suggestions drawn from psychology or biology or sociology may lower this sense of personal responsibility (as they certainly do today), but the fashion will pass, and with it no little of the unrest and anxiety and inefficiency which the suppression of truth always entails. The Christian Gospel of a redemption from the pitiful misery, the ugly selfishness, the admitted disillusionment of our modern life, stands or falls with its initial condemnation of that life, in the individual and the society, as "sinful"—that is, as something that ought not to be, and need not be, and would not be but for our evil choices. The first demand of the Gospel is for "repentance", which means our own judgment of ourselves as "sinners", our own change of purpose, and our own acceptance of responsibility for the evil we have done. It is the very nature of the "grace" which underlies that Gospel that it often initiates and always deepens the repentance which it demands.

The raw material of repentance is in every heart that cares to be honest with itself, and only when there is repentance can the individual have any concern with, or any interest in, that forgiveness of sins which is central in the Gospel of Redemption.

(2) But is there not an unwarranted assumption in the claim that moral evil does concern God so intimately, and that anything to be called a "redemption" is necessary? We cannot, it might be said, deny that there is such a thing as moral evil, and we must deal with it as best we can, individually and socially. But, after all, it is a purely human affair, a transient and negligible feature when we think of the God of the starry sky. Can we, as Kant did in another connection, couple together the starry sky and the moral law? Are we really to believe that our petty sins concern the God of the universe? Well, the sinner cannot look into God's eyes as he can look into those of a man he has wronged, and read there the condemnation of his sin and the suffering it has brought to his friend. We cannot hope to prove anything about God, even His very existence, by the evidence of the senses (which ought to hinder us also from trying to measure His character and interests simply by the evidence of the telescope). But if we believe in God at all, we must credit Him with the best and highest we know, and if we have rejected that best and highest in ourselves, we have rejected it in Him, or we make God less than ourselves. If my sin wrongs myself and my neighbour, much more must it wrong God. How, then, does sin affect God and what is His reaction to it? This is the crucial question of our theme, and all we say about "redemption" or "atonement" or "reconciliation" will obviously be conditioned by the answer we give to it. It is of the essence of the New Testament answer that it is not framed on *a priori* lines, simply from a philosophical argument concerning the nature of God.

The answer is given in a historical event, the way in which Jesus Christ was affected by man's sin, and the reaction of Jesus to it. This is not the place to consider in general the historical element in Christianity (see Cc. IV, V.). But the fundamental principle must be grasped, viz. that the effective speech of God to man must always, directly and indirectly, be in terms of history. God can say nothing intelligible to us in a vacuum. Every mysticism that has any meaning at all must be linked to human history, racial and individual, even if, relatively, we may speak of an "immediate" communion with God. The prophets of Israel, those supreme agents of revelation, owed the occasion and the content of their message to historical events. Every "word" of God is a fragment of human history, and His speech to us must always accept the limitations of our historical experience. For the Christian, the Incarnation is the limiting case of this universal principle of revelation. The Christian faith is essentially and in origin an interpretation of God in terms of Jesus Christ. With innumerable differences of emphasis, it always says, "God is like this, and the best and truest I can know of Him will be based on what I know of Jesus." But it says more, for it declares, "The words and deeds of this Man are the unique act of God in human history."

The Cross is central in this divine act of redemption and revelation, not only because it marks the culminating and most intense moment of the life of Jesus in His fullest surrender to the will of God (as known to Him through God's providential control of events), but also because Jesus on His Cross comes to closest grips with man's sin, the primary fact for the Christian Gospel and Redemption. There is nothing artificial or even theological in this historical juxtaposition of sin and grace. It has a natural and human history to explain it. Whatever we think of God, it is a historical fact beyond question that the moral

evil of man crucified Jesus. But equally the "grace" of Jesus, seen in His forgiving love and loving forgiveness of those who killed Him, is a fact of history beyond denial by any reasonable criticism. Here in this world of ours, we find the actuality of "sin" and "grace". If there is a God and Father of Jesus Christ, this is where we may best know what sin does to God, and how God reacts to sin. If Christ's forgiveness is a costly one, then so is God's. We have no right to draw an arbitrary line, in the interests of Greek metaphysics, and say that Christ's forgiveness on the Cross was costly to *Him* in the agony of suffering, physical and mental, but cost nothing to God, who is *ipso facto* incapable of suffering. Of course, all our interpretation of God in terms of Jesus is so far "anthropomorphic"; we are consciously using finite symbols of the infinite, just as when we call God "Father". But the love of God, on which any Gospel of forgiveness is based, must be a sacrificial and costly love to be worthy of its human parallel and its revelation in human history. We cannot evade this issue by appeal to the "two-nature" theory of Christ's Person, in such a way as to make His revelation of God an artificial one, so that he is said to suffer as man, but not as God. We must at all costs hold fast to the "actuality" of redemption. It is historical fact, not theological fiction, that Jesus Christ in the unmistakable unity of His personality bore the worst that man could do to Him, and transformed it into the best that we dare to believe of God. The actual need for redemption was met at Calvary by an actual forgiveness of sin; this is our datum for any Christian interpretation of God's concern with sin. But, obviously, we need to go deeper, if we can, into the question of the "cost" of forgiveness, because this is just where the variety in the types of doctrine becomes noticeable. Christian theologians in general would agree that the forgiving

love of God is revealed in Christ and especially in His Cross. This is common ground; whatever else is believed to be necessary, it is held that the love of God displayed in Christ both moves man to repentance and establishes his confidence that his sin is forgiven by God. But here comes a great division of thought. From the time of Abelard some theologians have held that the forgiveness of sins means no more than this. God says, in Jesus Christ, "I forgive you," and there's an end of it. Appeal is often made to the parable of the Prodigal Son as warranting this view of forgiveness. The simplicity and intelligibility of this view seem to commend it; moreover, we escape by it from all the repulsiveness of "commercial" transactions between Christ and the Father, all the artificiality of the formal recognition by Christ of a broken law, all the injustice of one being punished for another's guilt, all the anachronism of supposing God requires a "sacrifice" before He can be approached. But it is very doubtful whether such simplicity is a virtue in any interpretation of God's ways. There is a mystery of godliness as well as of iniquity; is human goodness itself so simple as it looks? In fact, as Professor H. R. Mackintosh has rightly urged in his book *The Christian Experience of Forgiveness*, the real forgiveness of one man by another is not anything like so simple as saying "I forgive you." There is no forgiveness worthy the name without suffering. The saint's forgiveness of the sinner is always a costly thing; from the first contact of the holy with the unholy, and through the struggle of one soul to save another, right up to the triumphant restoration of the sinner to the fellowship of God, there is for the saint the agony of a spiritual suffering, which we lesser men, for whom "to forgive is to forget," hardly know. If it be said that all this voluntary suffering with and for the sinner is more than forgiveness ought to mean, that is

just the point at issue. It is more than what most of us Christians mean by forgiveness. But is it more than forgiveness in the saints of God, such as St. Teresa, of whom it was said that the way to make her your friend was to do her an injury? And is it more than the forgiveness of Christ, who came to seek and to save the sinner with whom He was ready to identify Himself? If, then, we are to interpret God through Christ, it does not seem possible to make Him an "unmoved Mover" of men to repentance. The holy God must in some sense we cannot fully imagine suffer through the sin of man, to whom He has given the awful power to defy Him for a season. The creature is always within the comprehensive circle of the Creator, or he could not continue to exist. But the impact of his sin on Holy Being must bring to Holiness that which corresponds to suffering in our experience. One reaction of the holiness which we can conceive, and a true one, so far as it goes, is Holy Wrath. Even man can feel indignation and anger against wrong-doing; shall God be less than man in this respect? But there is a deeper reaction of Holy *Love* to sin, and that is the voluntary acceptance of the suffering in order to save the sinner. That is grace, not deduced by any *a priori* argument about the nature of God, but ascribed to God because of what man has actually seen in Jesus Christ. Once seen, it becomes convincing by its own intrinsic quality. We feel that this is how God, being God, must react against sin. In the ways of eternity, which our speech can but imperfectly symbolize, the divine suffering transforms the sin of man into the grace of God. God does in the unseen world what Christ did in the seen, by a sort of spiritual alchemy. Just as the first key-word for the Christian Gospel of Redemption is "actuality", the reality of history, so the second is "transformation", by the miracle of grace.

There is nothing new in this conception of God, the great burden-bearer by His own will and not a weary Titan on whom an unwilling burden has been thrust. The conception goes back to Hebrew prophecy, the true cradle of the Christian faith. The nameless prophet of the exile contrasts the God of Israel with the gods of Babylon (Isa. xlv. 1-4). They themselves, as seen in their idols, are a burden to be carried; but the God of Israel can say, "Even to old age I am He, and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; yea, I will carry and will deliver." God's chief burden is the sin of man. The penitent sinner *knows* that his sin does not concern himself alone; indeed, when face to face with God he is moved to cry, "Against thee, thee only have I sinned" (Ps. li. 4). However deep and sincere his penitence, he knows that he cannot loose the burden of his sin from his own shoulders or carry it alone. God, the very God he has wronged by his sin, must help him not by *saying* but by *doing* something. The discovery through Christ that God is doing something all the time, that God is carrying this burden with him and for him even as the earth carries his body—this discovery is the beginning of the revelation of the love of God, the knowledge of the Gospel. On the other view, indicated above—the Abelardian—revelation is redemption; on this view, which goes so much deeper in meeting the ultimate needs of penitence, redemption is revelation and God is known, as indeed He is known throughout the Bible, by what He does. It is a matter of secondary importance what metaphor we use to describe this, for indeed all our doctrines of redemption are expanded metaphors. When they are worked out logically they break up the indivisible unity of reconciliation with God—the consciousness of something done for us both *by* God and *to* God. In fact, we cannot hope to include the consciousness of God in our own or hold at the same

moment the objectivity of Christ's work towards God and its subjectivity in God, until our philosophy can solve the problem of the relation of time and eternity. But even the crudest of the metaphors, such as the ransom paid to the devil that he might release his captives, bears witness to the conviction that God must do something with sin, and that He must not simply agree to ignore it. Anselm, who so fully recognized the objectivity of this burden, conceived sin as a violation of God's honour, for which "satisfaction" is rendered by the death of Christ. The Reformers, working with the conception of a public law of righteousness, regarded Christ as taking the place of guilty sinners and bearing the punishment instead. Nearer our own times, escape from the law court metaphor has been sought in the theory of a vicarious confession of sin, or of a vicarious penitence, rendered by Christ on behalf of the sinner. All these and scores of other theories or varieties of theories can easily be criticized, and they are all vulnerable to criticism, if only because they all conceive the work of Christ as in some sense apart from God and rendered to God. But, as is said by Paul himself, who could conceive the redeeming work of Christ in such sharply forensic terms, "God commendeth his own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. v. 8). That is not an "Abelardian" text, as has sometimes been claimed, for Paul has just said that "Christ died for the ungodly," and is just about to say that we are "justified by His blood," the sacrificial blood which guilty man needed, according to ancient conceptions, in order to approach God. But the text does suggest that an adequate doctrine of redemption must bring together all that Christ did at a particular moment of history, and all that God does throughout all our history, and see them as one—not simply because the historical reveals the eternal, true as

that is, but also because the historical *is* the eternal at that moment of time and under the limiting conditions of human history; it is God's act in time. That is the ultimate ground, however difficult be its explication, which assures the sinner that God has dealt with his sin by transforming it into His grace. Through that great act in time, we are enabled to penetrate the secret of eternity, and the visible redemption reveals the invisible.

(3) Moreover, the deeper and higher the idea of redemption as a work of God, the more powerful is the moral dynamic which it yields for man. Redemption means more than revelation, but the more it means the richer is its meaning as revelation. If in Christ and His Cross we see God actually doing something with our sin that costs Him suffering we have a greater revelation of His love than any prophetic utterance or deed could bring. The historic faith is that "God so loved the world that He gave": the more costly the giving the greater the measure of the love. This is where the "romance" of the Gospel is seen; the poetry of religion excels the prose of theology. We see that poetry breaking out again and again in the New Testament, as when Paul describes the voluntary descent of the Eternal Son of God to empty Himself in the death of the Cross, that He may win a new and glorious "name" (Phil. ii.); the whole passage is modelled on the poetry of Isaiah liii, and "He emptied himself . . . unto death" reproduces the Hebrew of Isaiah liii. 12. Again in the story of the feet-washing (John xiii.) Jesus is represented as moving in a great arc of descent and ascent which touches its lowest point just here: "Knowing . . . that he came forth from God and goeth unto God, he riseth from supper, and layeth aside his garments and took a towel and girded himself" (verses 3, 4). In such poetry the beauty of truth is made manifest. If, as Francis Thompson said, "every great poem is a sacrifice,"

it is not less true that every great sacrifice is a poem, and most of all the sacrifice of Jesus. We cannot dismiss the Pauline and Johannine way of stating the Gospel as simply Christian mythology. All we can ever say of the eternal must be in the symbolic and imperfect forms of time; the greater their beauty, the greater will be their truth; criticism of particular features does not touch the truth they seek to express, the truth of which the beauty gleams through the muddy vesture of our earthly language. The Gospel is poetry, for it is the romance of God's love story, but none the less it is rooted and grounded in historic fact; it is actual with the sweat and blood of Gethsemane and Calvary. As the forgiving love of Christ becomes actual in and through the drama of the Cross, so the costly forgiveness of God continues to make its appeal through the historic incidents and circumstances of the life and death of Jesus. It is so high and beautiful a thing that when men have once seen it they cannot escape from it. It moves them as nothing else could do. To remain indifferent to such costly love, offering itself to us and for us, seems the one unpardonable sin, the act of a churl, for whom there can be no redemption. So the love of the highest becomes a deliverance from the lowest—which is a profound psychological truth, for it is what we attend to that at last shapes our thought and our motive; moral evil remains possible only when we will not attend to that which condemns it. We may be impelled to believe, as has been said, from the direct perception that "a particular kind of life is the life most worth living" (Dr. Edwin Beyan, *Christianity*, p. 254). But we are enabled to share that life in whatever degree by the conviction that it is the life of God whose redemptive work has become the effective revelation of His being and of His purpose.

Our deepest moral consciousness is met by the essential

and intrinsic rightness of God's way in Christ. Our emotional nature can be stirred by the beauty of the human story of Jesus and of the grace of the living God seen through it. Our intellect, when its necessary criticism of historic detail or metaphysical speculation has been wrought out to the full, can rest in the belief that this is the truest of all theisms. Such an appeal as this is necessarily individual. But its essential nature is social. It is no accident of expression that the supreme work attributed to the Holy Spirit in the New Testament is the creation of "fellowship" or "communion" (as is the meaning in the triple Benediction). The "fruit" of the Spirit (Gal. v. 22, 23) largely consists in the right moral relation of man to man; the "gifts" of the Spirit (1 Cor. xii. 4 ff.) are not meant for individual glory, but for the service of the community. Christian ethics are social ethics in origin as well as in application. They spring from the Gospel. They depend for their moral dynamic on the altruism of Christ, which is the altruism of God. Their accomplishment is represented as dependent on the reproduction of Christ's Spirit in us. That is why Christian "casuistry" always runs a certain peril. Even to try to systematize the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount has its danger—the danger of forgetting that Christianity is not a new law so much as a new life. We may compare the ethics of Stoicism with the ethics of Christianity and be left wondering why the one failed to move the mass of men and the other succeeded—till we take into account the new dynamic of the Gospel. The Christian Gospel brings a man into a new relation to his fellows, and then largely leaves him to work out the redeemed life for himself, *because* it is God who works in him. The "social solidarity" of that new life will have countless forms and experiences, but it will necessarily go back for its principle as well as for its inspiration to the vicarious suffering that

created it, the principle expressed in the Cross as Christ endured it. The member of the "Body of Christ"—to use the Pauline phrase to describe the community of the redeemed—will therefore "fill up that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ for his body's sake" (Col. i. 24); that is, the union with Christ brings with it the joy of suffering as He suffered, of sharing His purpose, and of continuing (in this sense) His work.

The "Spirit of the Cross" can claim more than anything else to be the principle of unity in the Body of Christ so far as its conduct and character are concerned. Underneath the countless differences of speech and dress, of climate and country, of organization and worship, that mark successive generations of Christians, the altruism of the Cross stands out as the most abiding feature. The redeemed man is the man who in some degree lives or tries to live according to this principle, and for most men "Christian" conduct means the forgiving and gentle spirit. The admitted inadequacy of achievement in the individual life or in its corporate expression is perhaps the greatest of all objections to the Christian Gospel of Redemption—at any rate, it is that which weighs most with the outsider, and especially in such times as these, when there are many rival theories of life which do not present striking differences of result. Several things ought to be remembered, however, before a hasty judgment dismisses Christianity as no better than the rest of the theories. One is the degree to which Christian ideals have penetrated modern society, so helping to produce "humanism" as a theory as well as "humanity" in practice; the truth in humanism is largely borrowed from Christianity. Another is that the finest Christian qualities are those which advertise themselves least; the best Christians are usually those least in the limelight, and ecclesiastical statesmen are not always "saints". Further, it is the very altitude of the aim

that explains the considerable and widespread failure to reach it. The Spirit of the Cross seems the very antithesis of the dominant principle of nature and has superseded far later in time upon it, though the sympathetic eye may discern much in nature that prophesies from afar of the realm of grace. When we consider the momentum of that natural order from which we have come and in which we live, the wonder may well be not that the Christian Gospel has done so little with us, but that it has done so much, in the relatively short space of time for which it has worked on the product of countless ages of physical evolution.

(4) It is in the relation of man to the order of physical nature of which he is part through his body that we meet our fourth and final question—how can the Christian emphasis on redemption from moral evil be enlarged to a redemption from the other two tyrannies of suffering and death? This is a particular aspect of the perennial problem of the relation of the natural and the spiritual, which has engaged the attention of philosophers throughout the centuries. We cannot here, of course, even pass in review the varied solutions that have been offered, the attempts to reduce the spiritual to the material, or to sublimate the material into a form of the spiritual, or to remain content with an unresolved dualism. In the New Testament Paul was so far conscious of the problem that he spoke of the whole creation groaning and travailing in pain together and earnestly expecting that very redemption from the bondage of corruption into which Christians had partially entered (Rom. viii. 19 ff.). Just as along the lines of Jewish thought he conceived the "fall" of man to have brought a curse on nature (Gen. iii. 17), so Paul conceived a future restoration of nature of the kind described by Jewish apocalyptic when, for example, "the wolf and the lamb shall feed together" (lxv. 25). The modern man

cannot easily accept so direct an inter-relation of morality with the natural order, even though he may speculate on some degree of "freedom" and of resultant evil within sub-human forms of life. As Ward has said (*The Realm of Ends*, p. 358), "How far down within this seemingly fixed mechanism the fluent processes of life extend we do not know; if there are such processes their *tempo*, so to say, is so different from ours that their significance escapes us." He goes on to point out that it is in their comparative fixity, not in their possible secular transformation, that they concern us for good or evil. It is from the comparative fixity, the ruthless neutrality or indifference of nature as seen in the incidence of suffering and of death, that man seeks redemption.

Now there are certain postulates of the Christian faith without which its content is unintelligible or quite unconvincing. We cannot form an adequate judgment of the whole process as detached spectators of it, since we are never that; we must study it from *within* the process where we actually are. Readers of Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* will recall the comment made on an instance of cruelty: "Imagine that you are creating a fabric of human destiny with the object of making men happy in the end, giving them peace and rest at last, but that it was essential and inevitable to torture to death only one tiny creature—that babe beating its breast with its fist—and to found that edifice on its unavenged tears, would you consent to be the architect on those conditions?" (E. T., by C. Garnett, p. 258). The detached spectator can give no adequate reply to that indictment of the universe, but the Christian *within the process* is not without an answer, though it is necessarily incomplete.

Further, the Christian "values", the kind of life presented as the "redeemed" life, can be achieved only through the actuality of living. In the words of Pringle-

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Pattison (who shows so keen an insight into what those values are), "Nature is more than a training-school of the moral virtues in the specific sense; it is an element, savage and dangerous, into which the human being is thrown to show what stuff he is made of—an element testing with merciless severity his powers of courage and endurance, but drawing from him thereby the utmost of which he is capable" (*The Idea of God*, p. 416).

Yet again, Christian faith does not profess to supply a complete philosophy of nature and of its relation to grace; it flings itself upon God in prayer and looks for the miracle of His providential dealing with the individual life to which He has given this consciousness of itself and of Him. It is faith in "an overruling power, who if great enough to manage the universe must be great enough to answer prayer without upsetting the balance of the machinery" (G. Atherton, *Rulers of Kings*, p. 309). These three postulates, the inner point of view, the actuality of living, and the power of prayer, are of the essence of the Christian Gospel of Redemption as applied to suffering and death. The life that is built on these postulates does find a triple redemption. In the first place, the natural or social consequences of sin are accepted as more than penalty by the repentant and believing. They become part of the discipline of life; they are transformed in meaning and therefore in value. Further, the suffering which is in no way the result of the sufferer's wrongdoing can be welcomed as privilege. To bear it in the right way becomes an opportunity of witness-bearing that is Christian service at its highest and noblest (*cf.* the prologue to the Book of Job). The suffering has changed its nature and lost its bitterness because of the transformation wrought in it by a new attitude towards it. This view of suffering extends to all costly and sacrificial service "for Christ's sake" voluntarily endured. The creation of

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such new values as these is a redemption, beyond all comparison with any evasion of penalty, any fortunate escape from suffering and most of all any skilful avoidance of the troubles of others.

At the same time (as we may learn supremely from Getsemane) the creation of these new values by the Christian attitude does not deny the truth of the instinct that makes us pray to be delivered from this or that misfortune or burden or even this or that penalty of our sin. It is only when such prayer seems unanswered in that way that we can look for its answer in another and deeper way, as Jesus did. The inevitability we face is accepted as God's inevitability for us, and God can redeem us from the pain of its mystery and bring us into the discipline of its sequence or the privilege of its service.

The Christian values of this redemption from suffering are to be estimated, of course, not quantitatively but qualitatively. There can be no question of striking a balance between the evils of suffering regarded as a set-off from human happiness and the spiritual qualities of redeemed lives. As well might we try to compare the physical suffering of the Cross and its spiritual achievement. But for those who hold these spiritual values to be incomparably great, there can be no question that the result has justified the means, and that the goal is worth the journey. They constitute a prophecy of that final and complete "atonement" when God shall look on the new creation as on the old and see that it is good—in the light of its final *meaning*.

The redemption from death is obvious enough in the light of what has been written. The incident of physical death is transient and has no power over the values that have been achieved, which belong already to the eternal world. Christian personality, by its very nature, projects itself into that unseen world beyond physical death.

Whatever may await it, whatever be the new discipline and service, fellowship and growth, it has passed beyond the powers of nature. The stern schoolmaster has done his necessary work, and the youthful spirit enters eagerly upon the greater freedom of the university and all that new world of promise for which he has been equipped.

Such is Christian redemption from the three tyrannies of life, such at least in that ideal form which belongs to the saints. Lesser men may never wholly enter in this life into the peace of complete and perfect deliverance. But they know at least that this is their true life and that by these things they live. Whatever unanswered questions remain, which necessarily spring from a life of partial freedom set in what seems to be an unyielding order, the mystery of whence we come and whither we go, the mystery of other lives that offer no promise of any real life beyond death, the burden of wrong done to others that seems irrevocable, the sorrow over lost opportunities of growth and of service—this at least Christians know, that nothing can separate them from the love of God in Jesus Christ, and that God has taken on Himself the greatest burden of all, the sin and guilt which in act and in memory alienate man from God and demand a divine redemption.