

WHAT HAS CHRISTIANITY TO SAY?

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PREFACE

NOTHING in this book makes any claim either to scholarship or originality. It is not and it is not meant to be either a summary of Christian doctrine or a hand-book of Christian practice. It is merely an attempt to answer one question, and to answer it in immediate reference to the world-situation at the present moment. The material included and the special emphasis are controlled by this particular intention. Ten years ago it would have been a different book, and again ten years hence, by God's mercy, such a book could be written quite differently. This is written in 1937, and inevitably and intentionally it "dates." It is an attempt to meet the point of view of the ordinary thoughtful Briton who believes in his heart that Christianity holds the solution for the world's need, but is uncertain what it really has to say. I have tried throughout to "look at the audience." If a summary of my answer may be suggested, it might be found in some words by the Dean of Exeter in his recent book, *The Bible View of Life*. "There is something" (he says) "that the Bible has to say, and it has become during the

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last two generations much more clear than it used to be; it is the kind of message desperately needed now. The Bible stands for belief in God and belief in man. These are the two golden keys with which the door into the future will be unlocked.”¹

Some of the material in the following pages has already been used, though in different form and arrangement, in the pulpit—in the Abbey and St. John’s, Westminster, and on various University occasions at Oxford, Cambridge and St. Andrews. The substance of Chapter VI was first spoken at successive meetings of the St. John’s Lunch Club. It is not much more than the tentative outline of a book which I hope may one day be written. (Were it not for the Devil and the telephone I should venture to say, “which I hope one day to write.”) In order to keep my faith with the publisher, the book had to be written against time and during a period of convalescence when I was not properly fit for work of this kind. My friends, Hugh Martin and William Paton, have helped me much with advice and criticism, and it is, as always, my wife who has made the thing possible at all.

F.R.B.

ULLSWATER,
3rd September, 1937.

¹ Op. cit., p. 13. I have only seen this since my book was written.

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CHAPTER I

THEOLOGY AND POLITICS

I

THEOLOGY is sometimes accused of giving elaborate answers to questions which nobody in fact wants to ask. They may be in themselves entirely true and valid—so the modern mind tends to think—but the questions thus answered are unreal or at least irrelevant to the world we live in. The theology of some earlier generations may have been exposed to this criticism. It has sometimes tended to move in a self-contained circle of ideas, apparently unconcerned with or unmoved by those pregnant movements of thought and life which were challenging its own assumptions, and leading men to a radical revision of their traditional theories of the Universe and their whole activity in the actual world. But if we suppose in 1937 that we can preserve the Christian religion inside the walls of our churches, making no attempt to relate it to the thoughts which rule the minds of our contemporaries and those forces which,

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for good or evil, are hammering out the shape of things to come, then we are living in a fool's paradise. The questions which the Church to-day must answer are no longer within its own control. They are being forced upon it from outside—by Communism, Nationalism, Fascism and all those other titanic forces which are smashing in the gateways of history and drawing all our lives into their conflicts.

Aristotle was lecturing in Athens while his pupil, Alexander the Great, was leading his armies down into India. He was still philosophizing in terms of the little city-states of old Greece, small enough to hear the voice of one herald. "Even the greatest thinker of antiquity, with a sphere of interests ranging from the anatomy of a fish to the ultimate verities of the human soul, failed to discern in the Macedonian Empire the birth of a new era."¹ We must not fall under that condemnation. Christian leadership can no longer think in terms of the old familiar securities.

The world which now confronts Christianity and within which it must vindicate its claims is repudiating its fundamental principles. Christians are once more a small minority in a world in which their axioms are discredited, and in which their whole attitude to life seems not merely incredible but treasonable. They

¹ Quoted from H. A. L. Fisher, *History of Europe*, p. 44.

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are back again where they were at the beginning. This is indeed the strength of our position: ours has become once more a fighting faith. Stripped of many accretions and foreign bodies which historical accidents have gathered around it, it must now stand or fall on its own merits. And the fundamental question of this age, deeper than all temporary crises, is whether Christianity can survive and provide the foundation of that new world order towards which, with so much suffering and anxiety, the human race is trying to find its way. Has it a message for this age of iron, or is it so bound up with a dying culture that it must perish in its decline and fall? If the latter is true, there is little hope left for us.

In a world so frightening and unfamiliar it is the temptation of the Christian Churches to identify their faith with a mere traditionalism, and to equate the cause of Christianity with what is still left of the pre-war social system. But a *status quo* policy is suicide. "People," John Macmurray has written lately, "who are dragged forward into the future by forces which they make no attempt to control or understand, must have their future determined for them by economics."¹ "Ye know," said our Lord to His contemporaries, "how to interpret the face of the earth and the sky: how is it that ye know

¹ *Creative Society*, p. 15.

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not how to interpret this time? ” That is surely the function of the Churches and the task of Christian theology. Christians who believe in a God, sovereign over history and at work in it, can never be satisfied with a mere traditionalism.

In our weaker moments ours may seem a lost cause. The religion of Christ is fighting for its life, and the odds against it seem to be overwhelming. And the Churches, faced with this situation, may appear to the onlooker to be retreating on interior lines like a besieged army. Within their own frontiers they are gaining strength, but those frontiers are narrowing every day. Yet to stand on the defensive is fatal. Christianity can survive only by moving out into this world and saving it, bravely reaffirming its own principles in the teeth of the prevailing mass hysteria and the scepticism of the post-war mind. And despite all appearance to the contrary, the moral initiative is still ours.

There is a growing conviction in this country that only a Christian revival on a big scale can lead mankind back to peace and sanity. We who are citizens of this favoured Commonwealth have not yet felt the full force of the impact which has fallen upon our fellow Christians elsewhere. The Christian tradition still holds sway amongst us. Yet the security which we still enjoy must not blind us to the real danger: the

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tradition "may break down almost overnight when it is no longer sustained by a deep and general common *faith*."¹ What has happened in Germany is a frightful warning. The weakness of Christianity in this country and one obstacle to a widespread revival is the lamentable confusion in the popular mind about what Christianity really is. Not less weakening to the cause is the inability of so many Christians to relate their own religious convictions to the thoughts which rule the mind of the modern man, or to the moral, political and economic issues which weigh so heavily on our generation.

This means that we need a new kind of evangelism—a sustained, vigorous, nation-wide enterprise in disseminating the Christian world-view and its interpretation of man's life amongst ordinary thoughtful men and women. Unless the Church succeeds in recapturing the habitual thinking of educated people, most of its other activities are wasted. The series introduced by this volume is an attempt to meet this requirement; and I count it a privilege thus to write its first book.

II

What has Christianity to say? Faced with the greatest danger that has threatened it, and the

¹ Visser 't Hooft, *None other Gods*, p. 108.

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biggest demand that has ever been made upon it; what answer, if any, can it give? In the kind of world in which we are now living, what does Christianity stand for?

The classical theology of Christendom was worked out in the course of the early centuries to meet the particular need of its own time—the contemporary systems of thought which, if they were to capture men's minds, would have finally ruled out the Christian world view. Inevitably, the answer which the Church gave was coloured by the system which it challenged. The ancient creeds and formulas of the Church were primarily concerned with its answer to the dominant philosophy of Neo-Platonism. But this is not to-day the living issue. The "heresies" of the twentieth century are economic, moral and political rather than speculative and metaphysical.

I have used the word "heresies" deliberately; for Communism and Fascism at any rate are collaterally of Christian descent. They are violently one-sided expressions of real elements in Christianity, so one-sided as to be false and dangerous. The Christian answer ought to start by recognizing the authentic fragments of its mother-tongue in whatever new dialects they may be found. Only so can it meet them constructively, and present its own authentic Gospel as the real answer to the world's quest! Yet

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the new twentieth-century philosophies, whatever their original Christian contacts, have now developed into ambitious systems incompatible with its central principles, and must therefore be countered in the open field. The half-amused, half-bewildered attitude of the average thinking Englishman to-day, believing passionately in peace and freedom yet, as a rule, unable to commit himself to any ultimate Christian conviction, is an inadequate defence or safeguard.

It is true, no doubt, that the interest of our own time is rather practical than theoretical. Men want to know what is Christianity, not so much as a doctrinal system but as a principle of life and conduct; and they want to know whether it is practicable in the kind of world in which we must now live. Now Christianity is a way of living, and its most convincing answers to its rivals must always be given in the sphere of practice. Yet conduct rests in the long run on our creeds; and our politics in the end on our theology.

It is not possible in the nature of things to preach or to practise the Christian way of living unless the world is in fact the kind of world which Christ takes for granted in His teaching, and unless the Reality at the heart of it is the God revealed in His life and death. The Kingdom of God means the reign of *God*

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—not any political or social programme. It must embody itself in such programmes, for unless the Master was mistaken at the very heart of His thinking, the Kingdom is to be realized on earth; and that this was central in His thought and preaching is perhaps the most important rediscovery made by the Christian Churches in our own time. But the phrase as used by Christ and the Evangelists is an affirmation of faith in the reality of God which *is*, before it is a commitment of loyalty to something still in the future which ought to be. “The first question about Christian conduct is not What must I do? but What is God like?”

Thus the Christian contribution to the social and international problems of to-day and its answer to the “rival ideologies” is essentially faith in a true God. It is not much good talking about programmes till we have found some agreed goal. The world of to-day is a chaos of programmes, conflicting and mutually destructive, because we have no common world-view, no accepted interpretation of man’s life. What we have to do first of all is to lay again some secure foundation on which men can build in hope and promise—some common conviction and some common standard; and the one sure foundation for a new order is the profound Christian conviction that the world belongs to a God of truth and love, who is working out in

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it His righteous purpose. Thus "what Christianity has to say" is primarily something about God, the Reality who makes the world real. The fundamental Christian assertion is that God reigns eternal in majesty, that the nations before Him are as drops in a bucket, that He has revealed His purpose in Christ Jesus, and that in that will is our peace. And this, as Lord Lothian said on the wireless recently, is the one answer to the world's problem which has never yet been squarely faced.

To the man of to-day that sounds remote and frigid, and many, especially of the younger people, are apt to be irritated and impatient with it. But the hurt of the modern world is so desperate that only radical answers can avail. And if we are ready to think in terms bigger than those of small profits and quick returns, this is the one fundamental answer, and the most completely and searchingly relevant to the urgent practical problems of our time. The worship of Leviathan the Great Beast which is making a nightmare of the world to-day is essentially the denial of God—the idolatry of mere human power organized for its own selfish ends. It is now, as it always has been, destructive of all the highest values of human life; it is now, as always, sterile and reactionary. The way of liberation and renewal is the way of recovered faith in the true God.

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The final issues of history and politics lie in man's response and relation to the unseen spiritual realities. Is it not time for the world to rediscover this? The tremendous decisions which are being worked out in politics and economics and in all human relationships, the ferocious passions and animosities which threaten to tear the human race to tatters, are in truth the visible expressions of an inward spiritual conflict which is being fought out in the soul of modern man. The real conflict in the world to-day is not between any States or groups of States—not even between those peoples who love peace and those who favour the policies of brigands. It is more profound and more elemental than the shifting balances of power and the opportunisms of diplomacy. It is a conflict of ultimate beliefs, between two creeds, two allegiances, two interpretations of man's life and destiny.

We are told that this is an irreligious age; but in fact (as Aldous Huxley has said somewhere) Europe to-day is more intensely religious and more dominated by religious motives than it has been for a good many centuries. Fascism and Communism *are* religions, fanatical, disciplined and highly organized, which claim the whole of a man, soul and body, and control the policies of the States professing them. "As well as having their myths, these revolutions have

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their symbols, their prophets, their creeds, their rites, their martyrs, their mystical fascinations, their soteriology, their eschatology, the coming of judgment and a better world.”¹ The *decisive* issues of the nineteen thirties are not political, economic or military; they are essentially moral and religious. Religion to-day is the real motive power; and the civilized world is threatened at this moment with the last and bloodiest of the wars of religion. Yet we are told that religion cannot “do things”! It is on the decision between these rival creeds that the human future seems now to depend.

But the issue is not truly represented in the propaganda of Moscow, Rome and Berlin. The protagonists of Fascism and Communism wish to present their creeds as the two absolutes, the final and incompatible alternatives between which mankind has to choose. They insist that no compromise is possible, and that between these two exclusive loyalties organized in militant Church-States it must be a war of extermination. Neither appear to have the least compunction if they destroy humanity in the process. But this, however embittered and perilous, is not the real conflict at all. This is only a temporary alignment, due in part to accidental causes—the personal likes and dislikes of dictators, the political need for some

¹ Keller, *Church and State on the European Continent*, p. 40.

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common enemy to justify the dragooning of a people, economic jealousy and so forth. In themselves the two rival doctrines are variant forms of a creed held in common. The agreement is deeper than the surface differences, and there is a high probability (at least as regards Moscow and Berlin) that they will themselves in due course admit this. In the real conflict Fascism and Communism, despite their furious internecine hatreds, are together on one side of the line, and the Christian tradition on the other.

That is the real frontier of the modern world. The line does not run between Right and Left but between Christianity and Paganism. It runs between a view of human life which regards man as the last word in the universe and history as a self-contained process, and that which ascribes the Sovereignty to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Christianity is not a futile hawing still unable to make up its mind whether it should move Left or Right. It is the constructive alternative to both of them, and the one live option for the coming age if it is to be built in truth, peace and freedom.

For the dominant fact of the coming time is this—that the cause of peace, liberty and justice and of all that civilization really stands for and the cause of Christianity are inseparable.

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If the State is absolute in its own right, acknowledging no law but its own self-interest, then words like truth and justice are meaningless and all talk of freedom is delusory. Men are then but helots of collectivisms, themselves blind, irrational and transitory, and the age-long travail of man's making has no end but to produce more cannon fodder. If God is King, then there is a law higher than any national Sovereign State, and to it the nations must conform or perish. If God is King, then the common man is of infinite worth and preciousness in His sight, and the whole organization of society must be a means to personal fulfilment. The utterly crucial question of to-day is the question, What God do we worship? It is whether we commit ourselves to a faith that is sterile and enslaving or to one that is creative and liberating. And this is no merely personal preference like the choice of a club or a taste in dance-music. It is one of those moral and spiritual decisions which are determinative for human destiny.

To-day sheer political necessity is driving us back on the Christian religion. If Christianity is true at all, then it is the truth about life, not merely the truth about religion. And truth is often vindicated not least by the ruin which follows on its repudiation. The world of to-day is being forced to recognize, by the discipline of disastrous experience, that it has been living

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on a false basis and that its first need is a true theology.

For in fact all the problems that confront us in our search for better human relationships are seen to be now in essence theological. Take this problem of the State for instance. Does the State exist for man or man for the State? Earl Baldwin said in his last speech as Prime Minister, that no State is worthy of a free man's worship. That springs from something deep in our tradition; and to men and women of our social inheritance it at once commends itself as true. But there are few countries in the world outside the Commonwealth and the United States in which a responsible statesman could say this. In Central Europe it would seem blasphemy. It is, as we know, the exact contradiction of the doctrines preached by the new Collectivisms. The Prime Minister spoke out of our own history. The revolution through which we have passed in the development of our institutions has been the modification of the State by the pressure of a powerful Society. The post-war continental revolutions are the transformation of Societies by the pressures of an omniscient State. And for them the State is the supreme value.

This is true at present even for Communism which is fashioning a new social order through the instrumentality of the State and Party, even

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though it aims, in its long-term programme, at the elimination of the State. It is the central dogma of Fascism. "Everything in the State, nothing against the State, nothing outside the State"; "no human and spiritual ends can be realized outside the State." For the National Socialism of the Third Reich the State is at once the Incarnation and the organic expression of the *Volk*—the giver of rights and determiner of destiny, totalitarian and beyond criticism. Against itself, it claims, there is no law. In none of these three forms of polity can the individual claim any rights; he can exist only as a citizen, which means in effect as a member of the Party. Thus the whole duty of man becomes unquestioning loyalty to the State—i.e. to that group of human beings, who may be wise, "benevolent despots," but may equally well be unscrupulous gangsters, who have managed to get the power into their own hands. If we recoil from that, what is the answer to it?

The traditional English attitude to the State may, of course, rest on nothing more positive than the relics of Whiggism and *laissez-faire*; and if so, there is nothing specially noble in it. Indeed it may be merely the expression of that complacent bourgeois individualism against which the continental revolutions are, in part at least, impassioned protests. The "Liberalism" which Herr Hitler hates so much means political

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irresponsibility. But that, after all, is not what we stand for! Whatever it may have meant in France or Germany, nobody, whether friend or foe, can argue that British democracy has failed at that point. As Lord Balfour said, "we make the thing work." Yet a certain detachment from the State, a stubborn refusal to worship the golden image, is a vital element in our social heritage. And this is not merely because we think it ludicrous to worship a bit of useful machinery. It rests on something more fundamental. When the State has attempted to be totalitarian, in the sense of invading the realm of thought and conscience, and demanding that free men should worship it, Englishmen have "resisted unto blood." And this for reasons more than political. This has been a point of their religion. Such a claim has assailed their Christian convictions.

This is the point of radical divergence between Democracy and the Power States. We in this country have neither right nor wish to demand that citizens of other countries shall be governed in the same way as we are. Indeed it is vital to our philosophy to desire that all nations shall be free to develop their own political institutions conformably to their own needs and traditions. Nor could we as Christians be justified in attempting to equate Christian citizenship with representative par-

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liamentary government. It is probably true that no one form of government is in itself specifically Christian. Certainly it can never be argued that the forms of government worked out by our peoples, in circumstances now rapidly passing away, are the sole and necessary expression of a Christian attitude to politics. It must be wrong to equate Christianity with any one political regime. New wine must ever demand its new wine skins. The apparent collapse of bourgeois democracy need not mean the collapse of Christian culture. Indeed in itself the leadership-principle, so essential to the right-wing ideology, is a vital element in Christianity.

Christians, moreover, ought thankfully to recognize that the new-model states of the post-war revolutions do enshrine some true and positive moral values. They offer something to live for and believe in, they inspire a new sense of community, they evoke a dedication and self-sacrifice which should claim our genuine admiration. It is obvious that to millions of people, disillusioned, aimless and frustrated, they have restored a sense of purpose in life which has brought new hope and self-respect and a genuine ethical renaissance. And here I wish to guard myself emphatically against a ruinous misinterpretation.

It would be deplorable if Christianity were made to appear hostile in principle to the post-

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war collectivist experiments merely because they are unlike our own system or incompatible with the British temperament. It would be a complete denial of our own creed if we were to allow Christian convictions to embitter international relationships. There is some slight danger now that this might happen. Left-wing opinion in this country seems prone to develop an anti-Fascist complex comparable to the anti-Red complex which has long been taken for granted on the right. Both can appeal, unfortunately with truth, to the principles of Christianity. But it is of the very utmost importance that we should never allow Christianity to become the ally of political antagonisms. It is not the professed aim of Christ's religion to make the world safe for the British Commonwealth, but to make it obedient to the Kingdom of God.

It is inevitable that the Christian thinker should find himself critical and suspicious of those tendencies both Right and Left which seem to deny the Christian world-view, and must therefore, as he believes, lead to ruin. The more resolutely, then, let us remember that God is not the monopoly of Christians or of English-speaking democracies. His purpose embraces all mankind, and He is at work in all men and nations even when they appear to disavow Him. We must eagerly seek for opportunities, by personal contacts and impartial

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knowledge, and by the display of sympathy and goodwill, of appeasing political animosity. We must seek to learn to admire what is admirable in every form of human institution, and thus to promote that new understanding which is humanly speaking the one hope of Europe, as it must be the first aim of British statesmanship.

Yet what we value most in our tradition, and what we dare to believe to be Christian in it, is not in itself anything political. It is an attitude to human life, which is bound up with the total Christian world-view, its idea of God and the Universe, and man's place and destiny within it. This is the ultimate basis of Freedom, irrespective of the actual institutions through which it may find political embodiment. The Christian religion cannot be reconciled with any organization of human life which treats men as mere "functions" of the State—much as, in many contemporary novels, they are merely functions of the sexual instinct—or slaves of an economic machine. Men are made for God and life eternal, and no form of polity can be Christian unless it has that conviction at the centre of it. When it has, then it must follow that the State is an instrument of that spiritual life which must always outrange its own jurisdiction, not a god for devotees to worship.

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III

What is at stake, then, in the last resort, is the question about Man and his destiny. There can be no fruitful discussion about human society and politics except in the context of an agreed conviction about the meaning and end of human life. The supreme political question, as Plato said, is the question about the soul of man. And the democratic tradition presupposes certain valuations of man's life, certain interpretations of the universe and of his place and destiny within it which derive from Christian theology and apart from which it is futile and meaningless. The Power States themselves are well aware of this. They have rediscovered the old secret that education is the key to politics, and that he who holds the schools holds the sovereignty. Their ruthless regimentation of the schools—i.e. the minds and souls of their subjects—and hostility to Christian education amount to an avowed recognition that their system rests on a theory of human life which is incompatible with the Christian world-view.

Sir Richard Livingstone has observed recently that the aim of education is threefold: to train a person to earn his living—to be economically equipped and competent; to train a person to be a good citizen—to be politically informed and useful; and to train a person to be a man.

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All civilized States accept the first two aims, about the third there is radical disagreement. The totalitarian States say, in effect, that it is really the same as the second. The democratic tradition must deny this. But on what grounds? Clearly because we believe that a man is more than a citizen, and that to identify human life with obedience to the *de facto* Sovereign is to stunt and dwarf the dimensions of humanity. Yet such a belief is not self-sustaining. We cannot answer the question, What is Man? in abstraction from our total world-view; and in particular we cannot answer it except in the light of our belief (or disbelief) in the nature of God. Democracy, as we shall see later, becomes almost impossible to defend, except on the basis of Christian theology.

If Man is merely a product of natural processes, whether biological or economic, then he can claim no value in his own right, and the processes that make him can break him—a philosophy most congenial to dictators. But if Man is a spiritual personality—in religious language, a Child of God—then the whole situation is different. Then the end for which the State exists is the fulfilment of the life of persons made for communion with the living God; it exists for men and freedom is its purpose. If Man derives his value from the State, then that which confers it upon him can revoke it, and against

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the State he has no claim to be heard. If on the other hand he derives it from the fact that God loves and Christ redeems him, then he is an end in his own right, and the earthly State exists but to serve him under the sovereignty of God's Kingdom. If we accept the Christian world-view, the final criterion of any State is what it does for Mr. and Mrs. Brown; and conversely it is the Christian world-view, with its promise that Mr. and Mrs. Brown can be raised to new moral heights by the operation of the Divine Spirit, which makes it possible to believe in them and entrust to them the task of self-government.

Thus the political problems of our time are fundamentally moral and religious; and of no part of the field is this so true as it is of the democratic experiment to which our Commonwealth is committed. The most confident and powerful leadership in the world to-day is not only anti-liberal; it is openly and avowedly non-Christian and contemptuous of Christian principles. The answer to this must come from the Christian side. Democracy and all that it stands for is, as we know, at the crisis of its fate; but the gravest dangers that threaten it are less from without than from within. Armaments alone cannot preserve it for us if its inner resources are lacking. Other peoples in history before now have organized themselves for defence, only

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to find they had nothing left worth defending. The democratic tradition takes for granted certain moral and spiritual qualities, and if these fail it becomes unworkable.

Democracy makes upon those who believe in it far bigger moral demands than dictatorship. Faced with the organization of the Power States, it is bound to seem ineffective in its leadership. For it cannot throw up that kind of Leader without ceasing to be what it is—i.e. without losing its own soul. It cannot avoid that seeming weakness, but it has or should have other sources of strength. We are back on our ultimate ethical resources. What Democracy needs for its survival is the leadership of spiritual conviction. Only so far as it is re-established on its true moral and religious basis is there any hope that it can endure and move to the next stage in its development. All that we value most in our tradition is the gift of our ancestral Christianity; all we can hope to contribute to the future is inseparably bound up with it.

IV

But Religion, they say, is but opium for the people. That is one of the Marxian sacred texts; and far too often it has been true. The inventor of the phrase was not Karl Marx, but an anglican parson, Charles Kingsley. The only reply

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to the charge is to admit it. We are bound to confess that at some times and places some Christian Churches have allied themselves with obscurantism and reaction and become the instruments of tyranny. We need not look far to collect the evidence; but no English Christian, who knows his history will be ready to throw stones at his neighbours' houses. In so far as these charges are brought home—and it would be dishonest to shirk them—what they amount to is that Christian people have too often forgotten Christianity and substituted a terrible perversion of it. The Gospel itself is the main-spring of freedom—an exacting and perilous adventure which can only be carried through by its support.

It came to the world as an emancipation. Israel dated its national existence from the great deliverance "out of the house of bondage." So too the history of Christianity starts from the great deliverance wrought by Christ, setting men free from fear and evil and making it possible to believe in Man and his worth and destiny as a Child of God. This is still its gift to mankind. As it has struck the fetters from the slave and set free "those who through fear of death were all their lives subject to bondage" (Hebrews ii. 15), so it still offers to the world the life-giving secret of creative freedom. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

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Victorian writers, such as Swinburne, popularized the idea of a Paganism, serene, confident and self-assured, which was then undermined by the doubts and questionings which came in with the "Pale Galilean" to divide men's wills and weaken their self-confidence. But it is the exact opposite of the truth. A profound melancholy and self-distrust were the characteristic attitudes of the old world at the time when it first discovered Christianity. Contrast, for example, the bleak *Meditations* of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius with the buoyant confidence of the New Testament writers. "Believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things"—does that suggest an anxiety-neurosis? It rests on what Paganism lacked. For the latter, man lived in an alien universe in which there was no security for the human spirit; and the world into which the Gospel came was in danger of being paralysed by scepticism. Doubt about life had got into its blood-stream. We moderns are tainted by the same infection: the same paralysing ineffectiveness seems to have got the world in its grip despite all its machinery of power, and human life seems to be ceasing to count.

When the Gospel came into the twilight of the gods it set man erect on his feet and gave him back a life that was worth while. It revealed to him a spiritual universe with a Will that cares for persons at the heart of it—the God and

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Father of our Lord Jesus Christ—and in which personal values are secure. All the despotisms of history are built on disbelief in human nature. The Gospel brought to the common man access to those perennial springs of power which can regenerate and renew men and make them sufficient for their high destiny. It brought near a God who redeemed them and called them to communion with Himself. It gathered them into the fellowship of One who “was not ashamed to call them brethren”; and showed thereby that the life of persons is infinitely precious in God’s sight.

That is the true basis of freedom; and after many years of experiment the world is now finding out again that it has no other secure foundation. Faith and Freedom are bound up together; if we let the one go, we have lost the other. Christianity is the soul of Freedom because it is a Gospel about God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ—the God to whom persons are dear. Its attitude to the State and to Property and to all the big moral issues of politics, economics and society flows out of that central conviction. John Macmurray has observed lately that the real reason why Communism counts for so little in English Labour circles is that the basis of our social life in England is still fundamentally religious. He uses the word religious in a special sense. He means (he

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explains) that in all our social programmes we think of one another in *personal* terms.¹

We do, as other political experiments emphatically and disastrously do not. And it is from Christianity that we learnt it. For in a sense that can be claimed by no other, ours is the religion of personality. When we have said all that must be said about the betrayal or failure of the Churches, the fact remains written into history that it is the Christian religion which has been the inspiration and support of those personal and human interests which are the crown of Christian civilization. And because it cares chiefly for persons—which is what it has most learnt from Christ—it has introduced into the world a ferment which has overthrown one tyranny after another—in politics and in economics, in social life, in thought and in religion.

More than this, it has now become plain that Freedom can only be maintained on these high spiritual altitudes. When the climate changes it withers. Where men's faith in a living God grows dim, there freedom is always in mortal peril. For apart from that conviction what is man's life, and on what foundation can this claim rest? Men cannot hold to it in a twilight world, and will always be creeping into a sheltering servitude. It can only live in the daylight of the Father. There is evidence enough for

¹ Op. cit., p. 191.

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that statement in the politics of contemporary Europe. As the nations have ceased to be directed by any secure spiritual conviction, the Great Leviathan has been re-enthroned. Without some ultimate spiritual certainties politics will always in the long run become a naked struggle for power. The certainty upon which all depends is a conviction about Man himself. That conviction depends, in the long run, on the truth of the Christian faith in God.

Every day makes it more clear that we cannot preserve Freedom and Tolerance and human dignity and opportunity on merely humanitarian assumptions. They are the creation of Christianity, and apart from its dynamic they fail. We have tried the appeal to "common humanity"; but "common humanity" is not enough. Compunction and reverence for human dignity spring out of the soil of Christianity, and in no other soil can they take root. Even, as is now being demonstrated, academic and intellectual integrity and impartial scientific thinking can flourish only (or best) on Christian soil. The Christian world-view, even if men reject it, is the true security for sane thinking.

The nations are half-maddened with dead thoughts; they are strangling one another in a nightmare of hates and fears, illusions and false

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values. There is but One who can lead them back to sanity. "In Him was life and the life was the light of men." All that is genuine and worth preserving in the Western tradition is drawn from Him, and with Him at last it will have to start again. Meanwhile let us remember the great phrase that the price of liberty is eternal vigilance—but more over ourselves than over others. Lord Horder told the British Association that the salvaging of the world may depend on whether we succeed in retaining our own moral and spiritual integrity, and "refuse to yield to the pressure of what may prove to be a bastard civilization, or give way to the infection of despair." If we keep on letting our Christian standards go in thought and act, if we keep on asking What is comfortable? not What is right? we may wake up one morning to discover that Freedom and Faith have taken wings together.

Thus we stand at the parting of the ways. "The world must choose," as Mr. Eden said; and we know well now what the choice involves—between the way of Christ and destruction, between "life and good and death and evil." In this choice there can now be no neutrality; here non-intervention is impossible: every man and woman must take sides. For if we decide to suspend judgment, to hold aloof and stay uncommitted, that is to take sides against Christ.

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At a time like this, all men and women who believe—with whatever reservations on the side of traditional theology—that the things Christ stands for are the real things, and that in His way is the hope of peace and freedom, must come out into the open and declare themselves. There are many secret disciples whose lives and influence count for a great deal: but to-day what we need most is their open witness. The decisive factor in world politics in the dangerous years which are opening before us will be beyond all doubt the strength or weakness of our English-speaking Christianity.

“The hour” (says Nicholas Berdyaev)¹ “has struck when after terrible struggle, after an unprecedented de-Christianization of the world and its passage through all the results of that process, Christianity will be revealed in its pure form. Then it will be clear what Christianity stands for and what it stands against. Christianity will again become the only and the final refuge of man. And when the purifying process is finished, it will be seen that Christianity stands for man and for humanity, for the value and dignity of personality, for freedom, for social justice, for the brotherhood of men and nations, for enlightenment, for the creation of a new life. And it will be clear that only Christianity stands for these things.”

¹ *The Fate of Man in the Modern World* (S.C.M. Press), p. 130.

CHAPTER II

FAITH AND FATALISM

I

IF Jesus Christ came to the world to-day—some-one has asked lately—what would He do? Would He carry through a revolution, or would He merely preach about religion? Behind that question lies the great misgiving which is haunting many of our finest spirits, especially those of the younger generation. The implied suggestion is that religion is a thing too nebulous and too subjective, too intangible and too traditionalist to count in an iron age like our own. Our time, they say, cries aloud for action: if civilization is to survive at all, if the world is to be made safe for human decency, then there are tasks, urgent and imperative, in the order of politics and economics which must take precedence of all other claims. We cannot afford the luxury of religion—such, Mr. Peter Winkworth stated recently, is the attitude of many of his contemporaries—till we have seen through the immediate business. We must get to work

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on this world in which we are. The job is too vast and the peril too imminent to leave us time for concern with another. It is little good to recall us to religion: call the world back to peace and justice, teach us to love our neighbours as ourselves and to make a world fit for men and women in which human values are secure. After that it will once more be possible and legitimate to learn to love God. Till then we must put religion in cold storage.

It is easy enough to insist, by way of answer, that religion is not like bath salts or rare books—one of those refinements or luxuries which men on active service must sacrifice; that it must be either dominant or nothing. But the point is not to be dismissed so glibly. For it is true, as things are to-day, that all higher spiritual activities and characteristically human values are being starved, thwarted and sterilized by the pressure of economic insecurity and the ever-present terror of war. And it is true that because of these things, faith in God grows every day more difficult, and would scarcely survive another world-catastrophe. Only in peace, as Gilbert Murray said once, can men do justly and love mercy and walk humbly with their God. There is some measure of truth in this contention; and it is true that to dedicate one's life to clearing some of the wild, haunted jungles, to bring order out of old anarchy,

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to remedying social injustice, to strengthening international security and thus to refashioning a world in which truth and righteousness can flourish and true religion once more take root, is a direct service to the cause of Christ. But the point is, how do men propose to do this; on what foundation are they going to build, and on what inner resources can they draw? What hope is there that they can take the strain of repeated disappointments and failure?

Here we encounter that tragic dualism which is cutting across the whole liberal movement and disastrously dividing its forces. On the one hand are the seekers after God, magnificent in devotion and fidelity but prone to live in a rather narrow circle of traditional thinking and parochial interests. On the other, increasingly unrelated to them, are the thousands of men and women of goodwill, eagerly seeking to serve peace and righteousness and the great humanitarian causes, and too often breaking down in disappointment for lack of the inner resources of religion. Why are they not in one victorious army under the leadership of Christianity? For our world is too poor to afford such wastage. Its primary need is a creative faith to sustain and rally the forces of goodwill, now so leaderless and ineffective, and to "bring the same to good effect." Only faith in a living God can do this—a God who has a purpose for the

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world, and in whose will righteousness can triumph.

II

There are people to-day who believe, quite sincerely, that faith in God must paralyse men's efforts, encouraging them to sit with hands folded leaving things to happen "in God's good time"—victims rather than makers of history. It depends what kind of God they believe in! Here, as elsewhere, a true theology is the precondition of effective action. And the real fact is, as I hope to show later, that the moral paralysis of the world to-day and the leaderlessness of contemporary democracy is due not to excessive trust in Providence but to sheer lack of creative conviction to stay the rot and give it a fresh start and release the powers of healing and renewal. It is the fatalism of the unconvinced.

Faith in God spells mastery over circumstances; and that faith is the nerve of the Christian religion. It is trust in a living God of righteousness—the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Eliminate the God-centred reference and what is left of the Christian way of living? Little more than a set of excellent maxims which the course of events makes daily more improb-

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able. Torn out of its background of faith in God, the Christian religion easily degenerates into a sentimental idealism of which men to-day have rightly become suspicious, and from which they react into a hard-boiled cynicism. Fine words butter no parsnips. Fine ideals are all very well, says the man in the street, but they won't keep my job for me. We have tried to believe in international brotherhood and a world made safe for peace and understanding, says the harassed statesman, but it is impracticable. Geneva stood for a noble ideal, but it has in fact proved itself unworkable; why bleat of peace when there is no peace? We must think in terms of alliances and armaments and revert to a realistic foreign policy.

Nearly all our cherished hopes have failed us, and everything in the world to-day conspires to drive us back on a disillusioned scepticism. One after another good men are succumbing to it, and sadly resign themselves to the admission that in the world of 1937 Christian idealism is a proved failure.

Here we run into a curious paradox. The temptation of some of our Christian predecessors was to detach their religion altogether from the hopes and conflicts of this world of time, looking to a perfect "world beyond", immune from the stresses and strains of history. This is, of course, a complete reversal of the outlook of

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the prophets and the New Testament. And it has only too often meant in practice the abandonment of this world to the devil, on the plea of serving God in another. Religion of that kind may be mere escapism. It is this kind of false otherworldliness which has led men not unjustly to urge that religion brakes the wheel of social progress and is therefore the enemy that must be destroyed. "Jesus offers Paradise hereafter, Lenin promises Paradise here." We, on the other hand, have gone so far in the secularization of the Christian hope as almost to equate the Kingdom of God with the plans and policies of our generation. When these go wrong we doubt our Christianity. We had come to identify the cause of Christ with certain proximate this-world ideals, especially those which have clustered round Geneva; and with their temporary obscuration we think that Christianity is eclipsed.

Now of course we are all grievously disappointed, and the faith of many is breaking down under it. But surely the real question to ask still is—How can idealism be sustained? Can we go on believing, hoping, striving, "building up again with worn-out tools," keeping our faith bright and our courage high? Can we—apart from the Christian religion?

People have ceased to believe that Christianity can maintain itself in a world of power

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politics because they think it is all lovely dreams or extracts from the Sermon on the Mount, for which, they assert, this age has no room. But that is indeed an anæmic Christianity, reduced almost out of recognition. For those who have been schooled in the New Testament it seems a parody of the real thing. For the Gospel as it was at first proclaimed, the Gospel which converted the Roman Empire and reclaimed our fierce pagan ancestors for Christian civilization and ordered liberty, was not extracts from the Sermon on the Mount. It was far more tragic and more realistic. It was the story of a Young Man, dedicated to a new age of Love and Truth, Righteousness and Freedom, murdered by a totalitarian State in uttermost agony of mind and body, broken by the hard facts of life, His claim discredited and His cause lost, who held on through disaster and defeat serene in His confidence in God, and in the hour of failure was victorious. He who would reveal God to men must show Him to us not only in the sunshine by the oleanders of the lake of Galilee, where all conspires to make belief easy, but in the midst of clouds and thick darkness, in the heart of sin, suffering and tragedy. He was offered a religion of Escape, and in the forty days in the wilderness He indignantly and decisively rejected it. He refused to live in an inner world of dreams unrelated to the facts of

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life and the concrete actualities of the world. He would manifest God's truth here on this earth our habitation.

The Gospel, which is good news about God, was essentially the story of that showing. It was Christ, crucified and risen, the guarantee that God's love and truth prevail through all that opposes or denies them. In the midst of daunting, frightful, shattering facts, in their unrelieved horror and brutality and their challenge to all faith and all ideals—there is the manifestation of Reality. That was the Gospel of the first believers. It was not a robin red-breast on a Christmas card or "peace on earth" picked out in cotton-wool. It was the assertion that Christ died for our sins and was buried and rose again the third day.¹

And that is the Gospel for an iron age. It was in an iron age that it was born, for what warrant have we for supposing that life was easier for the man in the street, or a vital faith less difficult to hold to in the first century than in the twentieth? Then, and ever again in past years, at times of demoralization and anarchy it has proved its power to be the creative focus of a new and a more hopeful social order. It has still that power to-day. The Gospel of Christ is not the sentimentalism of a visionary utopian

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 3, where St. Paul claims this as the primitive tradition.

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ideal in a remote, unearthly cloud-cuckoo-land. Nothing could be more shattering in its realism than the faith of classical Christian experience. It is the proclamation of a living God—a God who acts and “does things” in history, ever delivering the world from evil, ever making new worlds out of old.

That is the true basis of idealism. All our best ideals break down on the lethargy and selfishness of men and the sheer inadequacy of human nature. Christianity is a Gospel of redemption. It is not something about our “ideals,” nor is it primarily about our sins, though it has at times been made to appear in that guise. It is primarily something about God—a God who enters into the field of action, who delivers men from frustration and despair and the inner betrayals of our own nature, and guides the course of history to His will. These bitter post-war years have at least taught us that Man is unable to save himself. This is about a God who saves men—not by taking them out of this world, but by giving them victory within it.

That is Christianity, and it is unique. The idealist philosopher of Plato is called to be the saviour of Society through the contemplation of the truth of God. But he needs an ideal world for his activity. Amid the blizzards of fierce actuality all he can do is to crouch beneath a

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wall till the tyranny is overpast. Not till then can he begin to operate. In the world of things as they are he cannot function. His God abides eternal in perfection, but He cannot take action in the world of time. He cannot enter history to redeem it. He is not, in the Biblical sense, a "living" God.

The sage and saint of the Oriental faiths find the noble path to inner peace by various avenues of religious experience and through renunciation of the world. But they can draw from that no strength or guidance to redeem the facts of the actual world outside them. These faiths offer redemption from the world, but know no God to redeem the world itself.

But the Christian religion is not content with the cultivation of inner states of mind—or, as we now say, religious experience—however noble and however edifying. "Holiness," as Christians understand it, does not mean a mere subjective piety, but to be conformed to the will of God—the Reality that makes the world real. Christianity knows, alone among religions, that the true way of redemption from the world is the way of reconciliation to the purpose of God in the world. Of that purpose Christ is the Mediator. Christ reveals not beautiful ideals but the sovereign purpose of history—the Will in which alone is our peace. Thus the Christian idealist is not what Matthew Arnold wrote

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about Shelley—a beautiful and ineffectual angel beating his luminous wings in the void in vain. He stands firm on the rock of Reality. He has his roots in the nature of things itself, drawing his life from the springs of being and from those inexhaustible resources of wisdom, patience, courage and renewal which are at the heart of a spiritual universe. This is political and moral realism. And to-day the immanent logic of the facts is driving us back on that recognition.

Every day makes it the more clear that it is only Christian conviction which can give mankind confidence and sanity and set it free from hysteria and panic.

III

It is, to begin with, only faith in God which can again create the mental climate in which mankind can settle its differences by rational argument and negotiation. The Dictators pour contempt on Democracy as the substitution of mere talk for action; and it is always easy to ridicule the English habit of "Government by discussion." It is obviously exposed to many weaknesses, and both in ancient history and modern the experiment has too often broken down. Perhaps it requires presuppositions which only Christianity can supply. Notori-

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ously it may soon degenerate into the mere ineffective speech-making of an over-large and badly led committee anxious at all costs to avoid decisions. But it is in itself and in its basic principle a magnificent affirmation of faith. It believes that men can trust one another and that politics can be built on that assumption. Still more it takes for granted a conviction in the ultimate rationality of the universe as a place in which reason can prevail.¹

Democracy, as Hobbes clearly saw, is impracticable in a world dominated by panic and disorder. Some form of absolutism is then inevitable. Now Hobbes was, interestingly enough, one of the first English political thinkers who came under the influence of the new Physics and his political thought was avowedly the expression of scientific materialism. Later on Bentham and Karl Marx each thought, from his own point of view, that in an age which had ostracized religion, democratic institutions could be built up on a positivist, materialistic basis. What has happened since in Europe is the best commentary.²

For the world is abandoning belief in reason. It is one of the strangest ironies of history that

¹ Perhaps I may be allowed to say that this book had been sent to the printer before I had read the Archbishop of York's pamphlet, *Christian Democracy*.

² This paragraph is practically quotation from Dr. A. D. Lindsay's brilliant lecture—*The Churches and Democracy*, pp. 37, 38.

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in the age in which scientific research is achieving its most spectacular victories, mankind should have given way to total scepticism about rational control in human affairs. Almost up till yesterday the Western world was being indoctrinated by its prophets with the confidence that now at last Science was due to bring forth her perfect work, to eliminate chance, poverty and disease, to inaugurate a "planned Society" of peace, freedom and social opportunity, without any need for the religious hypothesis. The age of reason had at last dawned and a rational life was at last within our reach. But that bubble has burst almost in a night. The extreme demoralization and misery which had driven Central Europe well-nigh desperate seems to have utterly shattered men's confidence in a rationally ordered universe. Kant is proscribed and Nietzsche is canonized. Men have ceased to believe in reasoned argument and yield themselves to hysterical propaganda; more and more they are ready to put their trust in violent and instinctive mass-reactions. "What we want and what we mean to get" has become the standard of truth. It is officially laid down by Governments that the function of academic teachers is not to teach the truth (as they have received it) but to inculcate doctrines which lend support to the aims and outlook of the regime in power.

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In so nightmarish an atmosphere as this, appeal to reason is obviously futile. The suppression of all independent criticism and the persecution of minorities are inevitable results of a system from which the spirit of Reason is exiled and in which impartiality is treason. Round-table methods of negotiation are plainly out of the question between Governments which acknowledge no objective standards and identify truth with their own self-interest. Nor—still more tragic and disastrous—can the peoples themselves trust one another within national frontiers or across them, unless there is something that they can trust in common. With reason dethroned there is no such possibility. Suspicion grows with what it feeds upon; and in this demon-haunted twilight of irrational fear and nervous instability the task of the peace-maker may well seem hopeless. Moreover, the displacement of reason as the arbiter of human action has not merely unchained from the abysses the subterranean and destructive instincts which threaten to overwhelm civilized life till the jungle at last resumes its sway. It means in practice that the inventive mind becomes enslaved to the forces of destruction, so that at least half the mental effort which should be harnessed to constructive work for the amelioration of man's lot is absorbed in new inventions of warfare.

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It was said that "In the beginning was the Word"—that is, that a rational purpose is implicit in the very constitution of the Universe. The post-war age no longer believes that, and hence all its confusion and its chaos. The grand experiment of the League of Nations assumed that in future all its States-members would be under democratic institutions and could thus apply to international problems the methods of negotiated agreement. In that assumption it has been disappointed. But it also assumed, though unexpressed, another and still more fundamental axiom—a common conviction that the world we live in is the kind of world in which reason has a chance because it is rationally controlled and ordered.

It was surely no unjustified assumption in an age which boasts of being the age of science, and in which the majority of the finest minds, even though they disclaimed religion, professed belief in a scientific humanism. But the post-war mythologies have torpedoed it. Partly, no doubt, we on the winning side—if we can now think that either side "won"—under-rated the ruinous effects of defeat, starvation and internal chaos, and the utter moral catastrophe of the war unto the third and fourth generation. Partly, also, we must confess with shame, the policy of the Allies was responsible for some of the most deplorable developments which have

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gone so far to frustrate those plans and hopes. But beneath all this there is something more radical. The architects of the League took for granted a general attitude to life and politics which only Christianity can sustain. They thought—perhaps we all thought at the time—that Europe, at least, and the English-speaking nations, would still continue for many years to come to live on their inherited Christian capital. That capital is almost exhausted, and we have done too little towards replacing it. The world is approaching spiritual bankruptcy.

IV

Now it requires a certain audacity to tell the sophisticated modern man that only the religion of the Bible can restore confidence in reason and give back to the world the power of thinking freely. Yet no less challenging statement meets the facts. We have been told so often and so loudly that the orthodox Christian theology stands for a pre-scientific obscurantism from which at last we are happily emancipated by the modern intellectual revolts, that quite a number of people still believe it. But the tide is turning. Not for the first time the Church must come to the rescue of rationality and redeem the human mind from the scepticism of

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its own right and ability to think. To-day the intellectual initiative is passing back to Christian theology. Nothing is to be gained by pretending that the Church has not too frequently, in time past, repressed and persecuted speculation and closed the doors to the entrance of new truth. It has been one of the tragedies of modern Europe that so much vivid intellectual life both in the natural and social sciences has thus been forced into opposition and has severed itself from Christian allegiance. But this, however deplorable and disastrous, is certainly not in the nature of things necessary. Indeed it has been an entire reversal of the true line of Christian development. And all the time the movements of revolt have had to rely on presuppositions which are drawn from the Biblical and Christian legacy.

Charles Kingsley wrote many years ago now in a controversy about "prayer for rain" that personal trust in a good and loving God "engenders a scientific habit of mind." Whence was it, asks Professor Whitehead, that the Western world has derived the conviction, on which all scientific research depends, that the Universe is a system not a chaos, that it responds to the demands of reason, and that what the mind sees to be true and necessary will be found to hold good in the natural order? He answers that it is the faith, derived from the Jewish and Chris-

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tian Bible, in one living God of truth and righteousness, sovereign and creator of the universe, upholding all things by the word of His power.¹

It is faith in God, which seemed so reactionary to the advanced thinkers of yesterday, which has made the victories of science possible. And to-day and to-morrow it is faith in God which can secure for schools and universities their right to academic integrity; for the Christian world-view, even if men reject it, is the guarantee of sane, honest thinking. Even more important—it is Christianity which can recall a panic-stricken age to trust in reason and conciliation and to political and moral sanity by winning men back to a living faith in God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to trust in life, because the world is His world, ordered and guided by a rational will.

Such a faith is taken for granted in Christ's teaching. It is surely impossible to read the parables without discovering how His whole outlook in its calm, its realism and its hopefulness, is controlled by trust in a God who will not fail, who through the laws of everyday experience is working out His purpose in His world, so that men are safe in His providence and underneath are the everlasting arms. It is men who know that they can so trust life who

¹ *Science and the Modern World*, pp. 17, 18.

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will have the courage to trust one another. What enables us to trust life, in the end, is the central Christian conviction that the world belongs to a God of love and righteousness who is reconciling it to His own will.

And that is the basis of creative action. For it is this faith which offers liberation out of the prison of despairing scepticism and self-centred modern disillusionment into a Universe that is open, stored with unexhausted possibility, ruled by a Purpose in which man can share, which can claim and call forth the best in us, and give our lives unity and freedom. That is what gives victory over circumstances. It opens windows into a new range of moral and spiritual emancipation. For if a living will of truth and righteousness has the Universe in His control, then it is a place in which man can grow and rise to his full spiritual stature. We can be sure, then, that the lives of persons have some secure foothold in the scheme of things. Then justice and liberty are words that mean something.

v

But apart from that commanding conviction it is becoming increasingly impossible to believe in Man or in one another. If we once lose our faith in human nature then our last line of defence is broken. But it is hard and every day grows harder to find support for confidence in

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humanity without the stay of faith in a living God, sovereign over history and at work in it, redeeming men's failures and betrayals and summoning us to share in His purpose.

If God is King, History has a meaning. If not, it is just a succession of events, without a purpose and without a goal—a cycle of endlessly revolving escalators, raising one culture to the surface as it sweeps another down into the depths. It was thus, on the whole, that antiquity regarded it. Except in so far as the Jewish minorities (and one ought perhaps to add, the Zoroastrian) were influencing the contemporary mind, the world into which the Christian religion came acquiesced in this despairing view of a blind, perpetually recurring cycle. The beginnings of a philosophy of history were laid down not by the Greek and Hellenistic thinkers, but by Hebrew prophecy and apocalyptic, and most notably in the Book of Daniel (167 B.C.). For the Jewish faith, the course of History was the special sphere of Divine activity, the vehicle—as it were—of God's purpose to establish His reign of peace and righteousness. It was moving forward to a consummation. Against the background of the divine will the concrete historical decisions of the human race in its passing generations were charged with infinite responsibility. On the other hand, it was not in man's control. He might delay but he could not

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defeat the designs of the Judge of all the earth. Nor, in the long run, was Man responsible for bearing the weight of the world on his own shoulders. As Ranke the historian profoundly said, each generation lives directly to God. What is required of it is fidelity to the highest insights which have been entrusted to it. The final issues are in God's keeping. "It is not for you to know the times or seasons which the Father has set within His own authority."

The Christian movement inherited this standpoint. From St. Paul's Letter to the Romans onwards its thought has been continuously pre-occupied—at any rate in its Western traditions—with the interpretation of History in the light of its own experience of God. For if, as it believes, Jesus Christ, born at a given point in space and time, was the unique Revealer of God's purpose and the Inaugurator of His Kingdom, then History must be in a peculiar sense the instrument of a self-revealing God. It is not, on the one hand, merely blind process, nor, on the other, merely human striving. It is the response of Man, true or false, to the gift and challenge of an all-ruling Providence. It was this conviction, based upon the Gospel, which delivered men from lethargy and despair, which gave them back a sense of direction, which restored confidence and poise when "men's hearts were failing them for fear," and set them

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bravely to work upon the world again. But in our age this conviction is evaporating in the wastes of relativity and scepticism.

Our grandfathers, or at any rate our great-grandfathers, were still sustained and supported by that certainty. They still believed that the course of history is under the control of God's Providence, that in it He is working out His will, and that no sin or blindness of men could in the end frustrate His sovereign purpose. That faith did not lead to an inert fatalism. It bred pioneers and adventurers. It was the faith of the Puritans and Covenanters, of the men who founded the modern age in Europe and discovered the new worlds overseas. In their children's time that faith was waning. It is one of the paradoxes of our age that the only consistent Calvinists now left are the Marxians who call themselves atheists!

In our fathers' days men had dethroned God. It was then believed that History is "man's show"—that man, who had learnt the secrets of nature, could now mould his world to his own will and make it a home for civilized human society. That belief for a while bred an expansive energy and extended man's dominion over nature, subduing the clouds and the lightning to his wishes. But it has left him slave to his own nature. To-day the Kingdom of rational civilized man is threatening to collapse in blood

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and anarchy. The ape and tiger have still proved too strong.

The men and women of our own time are thus becoming increasingly the victims of yet a third attitude to history.¹ Neither God nor man seems to be in control. It seems that wild, irrational, uncontrolled forces ("demonic" forces as the Germans call them) biological, economic or instinctive, have the human race in their grip and sweep it along helpless to its doom. This is the utterly disastrous fatalism, the deadly fruit of a lost faith in God, which is paralysing our generation in nearly all countries of the world. We think there is nothing left that men can do. We talk about an "inevitable" war. Haunted with fear, but powerless to resist it, through the absence of any well-based conviction in the victory of truth, peace and righteousness, Western civilization sits terrorized, watching its fate drawing ever nearer.

That two-handed engine at the door
Stands ready to smite once and smite no more.

This is far and away the greatest danger with which the human race is now confronted. We must shake off this inertia or we perish. It is the way of irrevocable disaster. And it is the very negation of Christianity. What the world needs

¹ This section is closely dependent on Van Dusen—*God in These Times*, pp. 102 f. (S.C.M. Press.)

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most for its recovery is the strength and confidence which issue from personal self-committal to a living God. The immanent logic of events—which is the working of Providence in history—has committed into the hands of our own people special tasks of appeasement and leadership. Without the support of an ultimate conviction politics and diplomacy are impotent. We can only see through the task entrusted to us in the power which the Christian religion offers.

We do not know what lies before us. We know we are moving into an iron age which is bound to tax to the uttermost the wisdom, faith and courage of idealists. If our hopes and ideals are but wish-fulfilments in a world that is built upon some alien pattern, nothing but disillusionment awaits us. If the religion of Jesus Christ is true, the forces of hope, renewal and goodwill are stronger than those of reaction and decay. For then at the heart of the world there is a Will of beauty and truth, of brotherhood and justice ever sustaining, guiding and redeeming. Then we know that still, through our ambiguous history, there stands the eternal purpose of the Father to draw mankind into one family united in the spirit of Christ Jesus.

That is a dynamic not a static faith: it is not the mere assent to a formula or the passive

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acceptance of a creed. The central convictions of the Christian Gospel are enshrined, in the language of an earlier time, in the classical creeds and doctrines of the Churches. To many moderns these are an obstacle which bar the way to faith and discipleship. But we are not asked to "believe in" the creeds. These are, as it were, diagrams or schedules which need some readjustment and redrawing in every generation as it passes. They are not Christianity itself. Christians are not primarily people who believe the creeds and formularies of Christendom. They are primarily people who believe in God and Man through Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER III

THE GOD CHRISTIANS WORSHIP

I

“CHRISTIANS are people who believe in God and Man through Jesus Christ.” It is the last three words which make the difference. This is the distinctive note in Christianity and in the Western cultural tradition. We are often warned now, and not without reason in view of the current tendencies in Europe, that we must not confuse Christianity with any one form of social structure or particular political tradition. Else we may think it depends on their survival; and when, as now, revolutions come, it may seem to be overwhelmed in the crash. Prophetic voices, specially on the Continent, are challenging us to separate out the essential and eternal Christian Gospel from any admixture of this-worldly politics, any form of secular alliance.

This, in itself, is obviously right. “The only specifically Christian politics” (as Christopher Dawson has remarked) “are the politics of the world to come.” It is also plain to the reader of the Gospels, and most arrestingly in the Temptation-story, that the Master Himself re-

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fused to be entangled in the political aspects of Messiahship, or to bestow the blessing of religion on the programmes of Jewish irredentism. From all this He remained quite detached, and the message of John reveals the disappointment of some of his closest friends in His leadership. "This purely spiritual message is quite inadequate to the needs of our time: are you going to compel us to look for another leader?" No doubt also this was one reason why the mob turned against Him and destroyed Him. And this, we are told, is the standard of fidelity. So soon as ever the Church becomes entangled with any kind of secular programme, so soon as it commits the cause of Christ to any hopes and aims, however noble, other than the pure truth of the Gospel, it has given so many hostages to the world that never again can it speak with authority as the ambassador of the Kingdom of God. Moreover, this warning seems to be endorsed by the decisive verdict of history.

But the truth in all this must not be exaggerated. The idea that religion is something "purely spiritual" can find no confirmation in the Bible, either in the Old or in the New Testament. Nor is it one which can be supported by those who believe in God through Jesus Christ. Indeed it is radically incompatible

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with a faith that rests on an Incarnation. Christianity is not something "purely spiritual"; it is God clothing Himself in human life with all its wide-reaching implications, historical, physical and economic, as well as psychological and religious. "Ideas are poor ghosts till they are embodied"; and as God manifests Himself in history, so His will is to be done on earth. No will can be done without doing something, i.e. without some alliance with this world. Further than this, it may surely be contended that there are some forms of government and society—such, for example, as rest on slavery or on economic exploitation or persecution of minorities—which are incompatible with Christianity and against which it must always be in protest. Similarly there are forms on the other hand which, while not in themselves purely Christian, nor to be identified with Christ's cause, yet approximate more nearly than their opposites to the kind of community that He could approve. Nor, I think, can it seriously be doubted that the fundamental principles of Democracy—as distinct from its political machinery which must differ in different conditions—do fall, on the whole, under this latter heading.

It is thus, at any rate, that we have received it. The traditions and institutions of this country are so much intertwined with our Chris-

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tianity—with whatever adhesion of false and alien elements—that we cannot easily cut sharp lines of cleavage. What seems to us best and most worth preserving in our inheritance is of Christian origin. And the same is true of the West as a whole. There is, or at least there was until yesterday, a fundamental European unity, which rested upon spiritual foundations. The “Western” tradition does (or did) stand for something—for a certain attitude to the human problem, for a theory of life and a scheme of values, which are broadly speaking of Christian lineage. In essentials the Western tradition may be said to depend on those interpretations of God and man which have come to us from Christ.

We had assumed that these were secure as permanent factors in our social inheritance. That comfortable assumption has been smashed. Not even in the darkest hours of the war should we have thought it a probable prediction that less than twenty years from its conclusion the old tribal gods would have returned and polytheism again hold sway in Europe in open hostility to the Christian Churches. Yet so it has been. The golden calves are set up. Now, as of old, disappointed peoples are crying, “Make us gods to go before us.” Someone has said that ours is “the age of god-makers.” New myths and ancient superstitions are fast displacing those

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broad assumptions about man and his world and his destiny implied in the Christian idea of God.

II

This terrifying resurgence of paganism is partly due to profound subconscious movements beneath the level of rational calculation. Perhaps if Christians still read the Bible we should have been less unprepared for this. The literature of the Exile is full of it. Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Deutero-Isaiah, to say nothing of the earlier reformers, had to face a similar situation—a revival of primitive Semitic paganism, a recourse to brutish theriomorphic gods, a renewed cult of “wizards and familiars,” an invasion of Oriental sensualities. It has happened before now in the Christian period, and indeed to students of religion it is a commonplace of religious history. For in fact old religions “never die.” They are merely driven under the surface. In times of great distress and nervous collapse or of social anarchy and demoralization, when accepted standards and restraints break down, the ghosts of the dark gods rise from their graves and men revisit the old ancestral shrines. Since, as it seems, the invading gods have failed them, it may be that they may yet find salvation in the dim forgotten deities of the Folk.

Something like this seems to have happened

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now. The old Teutonic and Mediterranean gods have never been wholly exorcized in Europe. Even in England they still haunt the countryside. In the utter misery and disintegration which had fallen upon post-war Central Europe, the superimposed Christian foundations seem to have settled into the abysses, and the ancient cults have come back from the depths. The cults of Blood and Race and Virility, the Worship of Folk and Empire and the War-god, the mystical adoration of the Folk-hero, even the horrible glorification of cruelty—all these are strongly suggestive of *revenants* from deep, primitive layers of racial memory, taking possession of the souls of peoples.

But in part it has been deliberately inculcated, to support the politics of the Revolutions. The Roman Empire long ago discovered the need for a spiritual bond of unity to sustain its vast political experiment. Like the modern Japanese Government, in default of a universal religion it constructed one for the purpose, and established the worship of the Cæsar. It was a synthetic, substitute religion; yet it was compounded of vital ancient elements—of the old cults of clan, tribe and city, now as it were writ large and universalized. It was a kind of political monotheism made out of innumerable little polytheisms. It was not the religion of a living God—the true and only genuine mono-

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theism—but of the immanent genius of a state. It was therefore bound to clash with Christianity. Government might claim, as governments claim to-day, that it was of merely political significance and compatible with full “liberty of worship”; but the leaders on both sides, then as now, knew better. People were free to worship as they thought fit; provided always that they were prepared to recognize the over-riding claim of the State-worship as the symbol of a totalitarian sovereignty. Men, in other words, might worship God if they would agree to adapt their religion to fit in with the policy of the government.

Neither Jew nor Christian could accept that. If religion is a merely natural growth, a ritual enhancement or solemnizing of communal loyalties and accepted standards, then it was quite a moderate demand. We can well understand that to the Roman magistrates those who refused it seemed to be mere intransigents unfit for the give-and-take of a common life. But if, as Jews and Christians alike claimed, it was a revelation from a living God, authoritative, transcendent and unalterable, then the claims of the State were sheer blasphemy. That conviction they sealed with their blood, and that was the baptism of the Great Church.

To-day it faces a like situation. The new revolutions and the new-born nationalisms

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need an emotional focus of attachment no less urgently than the old Empire. They need a religion to sustain and stimulate a passionate faith and unquestioned loyalty in the wisdom and beneficence of the *régime*. They, too, find it in an old tribalism, in the genius of a class or race or people, erected into the grandeur of a Destiny and invested with the authority of the Sacred. This claim comes first. Within that proviso people are free to worship in accordance with their religious predilections provided that these make no demand inconsistent with national self-interest or the ambitions of the State in being. Sometimes, as in U.S.S.R., this faith is at open warfare with Christianity; sometimes it masquerades in its vestments under some name like "positive Christianity." Everywhere in the world, East and West, Christianity finds itself confronted with these new forms of polytheistic Nationalism. But the Church is an international society, because it is grounded on faith in one God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Sooner or later the conflict seems inevitable.

Now the State has its own intrinsic rights; and these, as Christians believe, are God-given. The New Testament is emphatic on this point; indeed St. Paul carries the principle to a length to which the modern Christian conscience finds it none too easy to follow him. If the Church is

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to live in the world at all it must live in definite human communities and therefore under the sovereignty of governments in all that pertains to the life of citizenship. There is also, in my judgment, a good deal that should be congenial to the Christian outlook in the German conception of a Folk-Church; for the "given" of an historical community is presumably part of God's created order. The Church should not be "looking for trouble." It should go as far as it can without disloyalty to "the Sovereignty of Christ our Redeemer." Any attempt to discuss this vast question of the relation between Church and State—the most complex ethical question of the hour—in a couple of paragraphs in a book like this would be so trivial as to be worse than useless. We shall therefore say no more about it now. But it is obvious that at any moment in a world so organized and so minded as the world in which the Church is to-day, the clash may come in its most acute form. When it does the Church can have but one answer: "we must obey God rather than men."

But the political aspect of this issue is not less determinative than the religious. If mankind is to have any hope of escaping from the chaos and anarchy of the present time into a new order of co-operation and unity, that can only be on the basis of a common universal religion. So long as men worship their tribal gods, what

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chance is there of a world-society? Thus the fundamental question of politics and the fundamental question of religion are once more found to be identical. It is the question—What God do men worship? Shall it be the refurbished idols of nationalism or the one God and Father of us all? Are we to make gods in our own image—the “projections” of our own greed and cruelty—or is man to be remade in the image of God? On the answer to that hangs the world’s future. This is the supreme question of our time.

To many thoughtful people in our own country such an assertion no doubt sounds exaggerated. We have seen the appalling destructive bitterness of “ideological” conflicts elsewhere, and they seem to us to be a clear warning. We will never allow such things to occur here. We British have learnt how to live and let live, and we intend to cultivate that tolerance, the loss of which would imperil our democracy. We will not, if we can help it, allow politics to become envenomed by religious differences, nor generate an overstrained atmosphere by turning every question that divides men into a fundamental moral issue. We have seen enough to be on our guard against that.

That is, of course, a wholly sound attitude, and we may well pray that it may prevail among us. Nevertheless it is true in the long run that

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the genuine, creative tolerance, the ability to co-operate together despite differences and disagreements, is the fruit of Christian conviction that we are all of us alike God's children, under His judgment and saved by His mercy, and alike inheritors of His Kingdom. Whatever vital international effort is still maintained in our nationalistic age, whatever human service is being offered "without distinction of race and creed," owe most of their inspiration to the Voice which told the parable of the good Samaritan. Thus the Church's fundamental task—the proclamation of the true God and His will towards man revealed in Christ—is also its most essential contribution to the cause of Peace and Freedom in the world.

III

Or is this merely the kind of thing that clergy say? Are we sure that this *is* the most important thing? The modern English formula in reply to it is that a man's beliefs about God are surely utterly personal and private, and that amid so much uncertainty, so much inevitable suspense of judgment about things ultimate and indemonstrable, dogmatic assertions ought to be avoided. There is too much "practical Christian work" to do for us to be dissipating time and energy on ultimate questions about the Being of God. To live aright is what matters, not

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creeds: live a good life and try to serve the Cause; the beliefs you hold are relatively secondary.

Now there is a fraction of truth in this fallacy. "By their fruits," said the Master, "ye shall know them"; and we know from experience and observation that a man's life may belie his profession. It is often (as we know to our cost) worse, and occasionally (thank God) it is better. But what this means is that his professed creed is something which he "believes" with his reason not a sustaining and governing conviction—believing it rather than believing in it—or to which he has given formal assent but without understanding its implications. Bernard Shaw has said, very truly, that in order to know what a man really believes we must judge not by the creed which he professes but by "the assumptions on which he habitually acts." Exactly: and that is the question we are raising as the presupposition of all right conduct. On what assumption are we to act? That is only another way of asking what we really mean by the word God. That is what is decisive in the end. Creed controls conduct in the long run. According to what any of us regard as the supreme reality of the world, that which gives everything else its meaning, so we shall act, and so will our lives be.

On the smaller stage of the individual life the most important question about any man is what

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he regards as the chief of all values, i.e. what he thinks is most worth living for. Where his treasure is there will his heart be also. He may think that money matters more than anything, and sacrifice everything else to its acquisition—honour, health, freedom and even life. That, then, is the god he acknowledges; and Dartmoor is populated by devotees who have given themselves to the worship of mammon. Or a man may, like many of our contemporaries, admit in effect that the word God has no meaning for him. Nothing, he thinks, matters very much, and anyhow there is nothing to be done about it. Life is at best a queer, futile business out of which you can snatch some temporary enjoyment, but it is not worth making all that fuss about. So he drifts afflicted with boredom through a world of unprecedented opportunity, constantly clamouring to “brighten” everything, but knowing no lasting satisfaction and acknowledging no ultimate obligations. This is a mood now lamentably widespread. We shall have to say more about it later on in connexion with the hopeless attempt to safeguard the values of humanism, but upon a non-Christian foundation. This detached non-committal attitude is perhaps the greatest danger of Democracy. For no fine living is possible in any sphere—whether we look to efficiency in business, poise in the home or grandeur in

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politics—without some conviction of commanding standards, the acknowledgment of some unqualified loyalty from which everything else derives its value, and to which, at the test, all else must be sacrificed. This moral and psychological need has driven great populations on the Continent to seek escape from emptiness and futility by surrendering themselves soul and body to the absolute demands of collectives—that is, to a substitute religion. But this perilous fact serves to remind us once more how utterly vital for human well-being in public life no less than private is this primary question of religion.

If on the other hand a man's loyalties are pledged to Beauty and Truth and Charity—if these are the character of the God he serves—he will without knowing it grow up towards them, increasing the depth and range of his living and enhancing his sympathy and joy, and his power to serve and help others. The contrast between this personal enrichment and the narrowing unhappiness and sterility of those who live for purely selfish ends, surely suggests that such an idea of God is at least nearer the truth, so far as it goes, than that of the cynic or the war-monger, the misanthrope or fraudulent share-pusher. It supplies at least some evidence in its favour. Every piece of honest work well done, every successful venture of co-operation is evidence for the nature of the real God. For

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life can succeed only in obedience to the real laws and principles underlying it. To live rightly is to know the true God.

The political implications of the question have been sufficiently emphasized already. It is surely no remote or unreal question whether the faith to which Europe commits itself is that the final reality of the world is in armaments and the interest of the stronger, or that it is in Justice and Brotherhood—whether it believes in a god like Moloch or in a God like Jesus Christ? The assumptions on which Europe will act—what it believes to be ultimate in the scheme of things—will determine the lives (or deaths) of our children. Everything turns on what we mean by God.

As it is the decisive question of politics, so it is the supreme question of religion; and one religion differs from another primarily in the answer which it gives to it. The popular and broad-minded thing to say now is that they differ only in unimportant things, in “externals” such as rite and cultus, but that fundamentally they are in agreement, so that “we are all going the same road.” This is the exact opposite of the truth. In external things nearly all religions are, roughly speaking, much alike to the onlooker. Christianity itself, for example, and the Mithraism which was its chief rival in

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the fourth and fifth centuries of the Empire, might have been very easily confused by a casual visitor to their Sacraments. Broadly speaking all developed religions use temples, sacred ministers, prayers and sacrifices,¹ and where more than one religion is in the field the cults tend to be mutually assimilated. This was a commonplace of the early centuries—though the Fathers had their own explanation of it as one more instance of the wiles of the devil. It has happened, too, as between Islamic and Coptic forms of worship in Egypt, and probably almost everywhere in the world where two religions are living side by side. We know from the Old Testament how easily Hebrew worship succumbed to the seduction of the indigenous Semitic Baalism. Religions are outwardly very much alike. Where they differ is at the secret heart of them, in the answer they give to the question—What is God like?

Christianity gives its own distinctive answer which is what it stands for in the world. It is unique in the record of religion, and by this faith the Church stands or falls. Like other historical religions, it claims to rest on a revelation; i.e. that its faith is not founded on the mere results of human ingenuity, but upon an act of a self-revealing God. Its claim must therefore, in

¹ Within the Christian tradition the Friends are a glorious exception to all the rules.

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one sense, be exclusive. It cannot allow historical relativity to invade the domains of the truth entrusted to it.¹ It looks as though in the nature of things there must be some point of final incompatibility between the different historical religions. They can never consent to be amalgamated by a syncretistic lowest common denominator.

Yet, in another sense, Christianity can afford to be more tolerant than any of them. No educated modern Christian ought to commit himself to the crude judgment that Christianity is a true religion, and all the other faiths false and "heathen." At a time like this, the least useful servants of the Kingdom of God and their fellow men are those who seek to emphasize differences and widen the gulfs that separate mankind. He that is not against us is on our part. Nor, indeed, *can* a Christian make this judgment without being false to his own professed creed. For if Christianity is true at all, if Christ is the "Word" always in the world and by whom all things are made, then there is no religion in history, however dim, primitive and unlovely, but reflects some rays from the rising sun, some light from the True light that lighteth everyman (cf. St. John i. 1-9, and St. Paul at

¹ Of course this does not mean finally fixed and irreformable theological statements; for theology is or should be the progressive attempt to interpret the world in the light of God's revelation, and must therefore always be developing and transitional.

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Athens, Acts xvii. 22 f., also on "Christ before the birth of Jesus," see 1 Peter i. 8 f.). Christians may not claim that other religions are all forms of idolatry and falsehood. They claim that the Gospel is the fulfilment of the religious quest of mankind.

This claim entails that all other faiths must be approached with reverence and sympathy. And beneath the common threats of a world-wide secularism religions are being taught to close their ranks. Moreover, we are becoming more sensitive to the truths enshrined in other religious traditions. God is not the monopoly of Christians. The early missionaries of Christianity would ridicule the "heathen" beliefs and "dare" their worshippers to destroy the cult-objects. The contemporary method of penetration in the mission field is the exact reverse of this. It attempts to appreciate and understand the positive moral and spiritual values in the faiths which are found in possession, and then to show that these—and how much more—are fulfilled and consummated in Christ.

There can be no doubt which is the right method. Yet it leads to a certain embarrassment. Sympathy and respect may be so genuine, appreciation may become so rich, that the Christian evangelist may be led to question how far he is justified in attempting to make converts from one faith to another. At the present

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moment there is a strong tendency to reserve of this kind about "proselytizing." But at once that raises the whole crucial question—Has Christianity anything to say which could not be equally well discovered elsewhere? Has it, in other words, been entrusted with a unique Gospel to proclaim, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear, or is it but one among many other attempts to throw some light on the riddle of existence? By what right does the Christian Church evangelize? And if there is, as we have so strongly asserted, something that is unique and incommensurable in the Christian idea of God, where, more exactly, resides that uniqueness?

Dr. Edwyn Bevan has said, very truly, that the really radical difference in religions is not so much between East and West, as rather between Bible and no-Bible. That may give us the answer to our question. For what fundamentally distinguishes Christianity from the ethnic religions is the Biblical conviction of a "living" (or as we now say, a "personal") God. The Bible rests on faith in a God, transcendent to the world and its Creator, who acts upon it through the events of History, who calls men and nations to His service and reveals Himself through the natural order but eminently through human personality. We may or may not be ready to accept this, but not the most

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cursory glance at the Psalms and Prophets, to say nothing of Gospels and Epistles, can leave any doubt what the Bible stands for. It is less about the world's search for God than about God's impact on the world. And there is a gulf which can never be wholly bridged between this dynamic personalist approach, and any religions which conceive God either as immanent in the nature of things or as an impersonal First Cause or Absolute.¹

The difference for personal religion between these two traditions is obvious. For the latter there is a real place for worship, but it must be worship in the restricted sense of mystical contemplation and acceptance before the ultimate Goodness and Beauty. And the Scientific Humanists of our time when they speak about worship seem to mean just this. Now admittedly this is a noble and a genuinely religious attitude; it can cleanse, tranquillize and strengthen. But it is not what Christians mean by worship. Prayer, in the sense of waiting upon God and personal communion, is ruled out. Above all, forgiveness is ruled out, and the question of Nicodemus has no answer. We may feel ashamed and rebuked in the presence of the imperatives of conscience, but there is no "Grace" that can deliver us, no remaking of

¹ The question has been most ably discussed, as regards the field of Indian religions, in a very important recent book by Dr. Nicol Macnicol: *Is Christianity Unique?* (S.C.M. Press.)

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the inward man. (And without this, as we shall see in the next chapter, there can be no such attitude to man's life as can sustain belief in Democracy). There can be no Gospel of redemption.

But the political and moral consequences are not less clear and no less far-reaching. If God is equally revealed in all things, He is never really revealed at all; it is then in the long run almost inevitable that moral distinctions should become blurred. If the human community depends on His will, then it must acknowledge a moral standard beyond itself and its own "historical destiny." If He is merely immanent within it, then the Community is its own law and the State does in effect become God. Here, then, once more we observe the close connection between the eclipse of the Christian tradition and the political perils of our time. The semi-official *Myth* of the Third Reich exhibits this in the clearest way possible. The point is well made by Dr. E. Barker in a recent lecture on Oliver Cromwell.¹

"So far as religion is part of [the foundation of the National Socialist revolution] it is a religion not of theism (in any form, Protestant or Catholic) but of Pantheism—a religion of a universally immanent God who, instead of being found and worshipped by 'a people of God,'

¹ *Oliver Cromwell and the English People*, p. 88.

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finds himself and incarnates himself in a whole people, which in turn incarnates itself in the leader of the people. The God who becomes a people, and the people which becomes identified with its leader, are not the God and the people which presented themselves to the mind of Cromwell. They are not the God and the people who present themselves to the minds of most modern Englishmen. The community 'ordained by God and decided by blood' does not belong to our way of thinking."

IV

Such differences as these are obvious. But to dwell upon them does not, in itself, justify the Biblical tradition. And it is, quite obviously, hard to reconcile with the assumptions of the modern man. The man of to-day, when he thinks about such questions, is undeniably shy and suspicious of faith in a personal and transcendent God. He associates it too readily with crude ideas of miraculous interventionism, or a presentation of the nature of God which seems to him mean, capricious and immoral. And for this the Church is partly itself responsible. Beyond this he finds it hard to adjust to those abstract and impersonal conceptions of the universe imposed on his mind both by the economic organization and the scientific pre-

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tensions of the age. Undoubtedly. But if it is indeed true, then it is not a question of fitting it into our theory of the world, but of fitting our theory of the world to it—that is to say, interpreting the universe in the light of the most important fact we know about it. If we cannot insert the Christian Gospel into our ideas and preconceptions, is it necessarily the Gospel which is wrong? If we mean to take Jesus Christ seriously—and many millions of our own countrymen still regard Him with the highest reverence and would wish to follow Him as their Guide to living—then we must go the right way to work. We cannot first think out our world-view quite independently of Him, even in contradiction to His outlook, and then try somehow to squeeze Him into it. We must put ourselves to school with Him, look out on life through the windows of His mind, and build our interpretation of the world on that which is revealed to us through Him.

It was thus that the Christian philosophy took shape, and thus that those insights and valuations which have created the Christian social outlook were gradually evolved and accepted. And here one thing at any rate is quite certain. It is utterly certain that for the Lord Himself an “impersonal” idea of God would have been not merely inadequate but meaningless. He was a Jew, and we must allow

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full weight to the Jewish background of His religious consciousness. But He was, on any showing, a genius, and the sphere of His genius was in religion. It is surely in the highest degree irrational to acclaim Him—as so many of our people do—as the great moral Teacher of mankind, and yet to assume that He was mistaken at the heart and core of His religious experience. If He was wrong there, if He was the victim of a mere metaphorical anthropomorphism, when He thought He was in touch with Reality, and had not insight enough to see through it, what likelihood is there that He was right in His ethical judgments and valuations? For the latter depend upon His religious consciousness.

Nobody who has ever read the Gospels, or has been brought even indirectly under the influence of the Christian Ethos, can doubt that all Christ said and did, all that He has stood for in history, is inseparably bound up with and controlled by His own unique experience of God. “Personal” is almost the *weakest* word which our language can offer to describe it. The whole religious tradition of Christendom and the characteristic Christian institutions—of which the Family is the most significant—are sustained by and still to-day authenticate the central certainty of the Master’s soul. The word He used Himself to interpret it has been pre-

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served to us in His own vernacular. It is the great word *Abba*, Father.

That word sums up the essential inward quality of the religion which has flowed from Him. In itself, the word is admittedly a metaphor: but everything that we can say about God—the Infinite and Incomprehensible,¹ whose ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts—is at best an analogy and an indication of what is for ever beyond our human speech. Logical definition is impossible. The ancient name for the Creeds themselves is “symbols,” adumbrating the truth to which they witness. Art and Poetry, rather than logic, are the proper language of religion. The Master Himself made no attempt to define; He had recourse to poem and parable, and above all to significant, revealing *acts* to express the content of His religious consciousness. The God of Christians is that Reality which shines through all His life and teaching, through His death and His resurrection, and through Him lays hold upon men’s souls. The Church knows well, in using the word “personal,” that this is merely the best it can do. It has never said anything so silly as that infinite Spirit is “a person” in the sense that Peter and James and

¹ Need it be explained that this word as used in the Creed does not mean “unintelligible” but unconditioned—absolute and self-subsistent? (The Latin word is *immensus*.)

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John were persons. It has said not that God is "a person" with that finitude and those limitations which are implied in human experience; but that in the depths of divine Being there is that which—in default of a better word—we can but begin to describe as Personality.

That, indeed, is already suggested to us in our experience of Love and Beauty and in all those activities of spirit which seem to imply some true reciprocity between Man and spiritual Reality. This is confirmed for us by Saints and Prophets, through whom we know that spiritual Reality is self-imparted to men and through men, and characteristically self-revealed through awakened, responsive Personality. In Christ's communion with that Reality which He taught His friends to call Father, in His perfect filial relationship, the grace and reality of the living God and His saving will towards us are made manifest. We believe in God through Jesus Christ. He is "the portrait of the invisible God" (Col. i. 15). We know God because He has declared Himself, "shining in the face of Jesus Christ."

There is ever so much about God that we do not know. To suppose that the finite mind of man can ever completely understand the infinite is either blasphemy or mere folly. "A God defined is a God finished." All that the Christian religion claims to tell us is of God in His

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relation towards men. It does not claim to supply the answer to every conceivable problem in heaven and earth. It is a light shining in a dark place. Every honest religion, as it seems to me, must acknowledge vast penumbras of agnosticism and about much of the mystery of life must be ready to say frankly—We do not know. The longer we live and the more we reflect upon it—the more, indeed, we try to reflect upon it against the background of Christian faith—the more mysterious does our life become. Christianity offers light enough to live by—a light in which, as the Lord said, men may “walk”—through trust in God as He is revealed in Christ. “In Him was life and the life was the light of men.” It is dynamic and experimental, and it verifies its “truth” in “the way.” The Gospel is not an abstract proposition, but that “God has visited and redeemed His people” and draws near to men through Christ Jesus.

What it proclaims is a Gospel about God. But it is mediated through Christ. He is the revealer of it and the source of it, its personification and embodiment. The Gospel is that God is in Christ. It is the faith of which He is the centre. To that, all Christian experience bears witness. In the classical theology of Christendom this has been expressed and interpreted by saying that in Him God was “incarnate.” This

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is the central Christian affirmation. Men may be true followers of Christ though they do not accept this theology. Others may accept this theology and remain strangers to His spirit. It is Christ who saves mankind, not a formula. And unfortunately "the Incarnation" too easily becomes a pious phrase, used as a substitute for Christian thinking. It is not surprising if the modern Englishman fights shy of it as a clerical obsession. Nor is this the time for the Churches so to delimit their dogmatic frontiers as to exclude any from their fellowship who sincerely wish to be disciples.

Yet there is no doubt that the Christian world-view, with its characteristic standards and values, has always rested upon this foundation. And it may be urged that at the present time, when man's belief in man is being shattered and Personality is in the melting-pot, it will prove to be this theology that can save us; something is said about this in our next chapter. Nor do I believe that Christianity will be able to exert its full force on human society as a way of living, unless it is sustained by the conviction embodied in its traditional theology; even though, as it is natural to expect, it will to-day and to-morrow discover new ways to express this, both in thought and practice.

It must in the end find its true expression not in any re-hash of arguments, but in a Christian

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order of society. The true meaning of the Incarnation can only be realized in a Community, and in the redemption of the common life.

v

It is not within the scope of this book to discuss the philosophy of the Incarnation. That is to say, we cannot here explore all those delicate problems which arise, or have been thought to arise, when men ask how the Eternal Mind is related to the human experience of Jesus. We can only touch here on one central point. The doctrine of the "Divinity of Christ" has been too often stated upside down, or presented to people in such a way as to make the Lord Himself seem "unreal." It has seemed to them that to call Christ "divine" is to take away the Lord from man's sight and obscure Him in a mist of speculation. It has seemed to remove the Christ who lived and died from the concrete realities of history and the hopes and fears and strivings of mankind, into a realm of abstract metaphysics. Then they have tormented themselves with problems—How can a finite mind be omniscient? How can omnipotence know pain and weakness? and a thousand riddles of the same kind. Thus we have made Jesus Christ Himself into a problem to be argued about: and have allowed a doctrine about Him to debar

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men from access to His presence. Yet He is not offered to us as a problem but as the answer to the world's question.

Now, half the difficulty which has arisen, in the early centuries and in our own time, has been due to the fact that the word "God" is still heavily laden with suggestions which Christianity claims to have made obsolete. The ruling philosophy of the early centuries assumed that God, as absolute Intelligence, stood in no relation to the world or to people and events in time, utterly transcendent and impersonal and unknowable by the finite mind. If these were indeed the attributes of Godhead, then the Christian faith was irrational. But what the Church affirmed was, on the contrary, that the religious experience of Christians necessitates a conception of God for which such a philosophy had no room. This led to the first great constructive enterprise of Christian thought, and its results are formulated in the crucial phrases of the "Nicene" creed. The situation to-day is not dissimilar. Not many people, not even all Christians, have learnt to bring their idea of God into any direct relation with the life and character of Jesus Christ. Indeed it is not uncommon to find Christians whose political and moral thinking still seems to be governed by an idea of God which is fundamentally inconsistent with it.

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But precisely this is the real point at issue. The doctrine of the Divinity of Christ means a revolution in men's thought of God. The aim of the Church in making this claim was not to provide titles of distinction or superlative honours for Him who cared for such things less than any man born; it was to affirm something about God. It was concerned with maintaining an assertion not so much about Jesus of Nazareth, as about the meaning of life and the reality behind the world. When it declared that Jesus is the Son of God, what it really meant was—God is like *that*; he that hath seen Him has seen the Father.

So far from making Jesus “unreal,” the fundamental result of this claim is to vindicate His reality and relevance to the life and destiny of men and women. If what we find in Him is less than God—less than the final reality of the world—then our trust in Him is but illusory. Is this the Rock on which life can be built, rooted in the very nature of things? Or is Christ with all that He stands for a fond dream? That is the real question at stake. If it is not God who meets us in Christ, but something less than the supreme reality, then we have not here a revelation of what is finally true about life. It is all up then, with Christianity, and indeed with all the finest insights and noblest aspirations of mankind. The nature of things does

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not respond to them; and that is a court from which there is no appeal.

This was what was really at stake in the great theological conflict which was waged at the Council of Nicæa (A.D. 325). Gibbon, and many smaller writers since, could be heavily humorous about a controversy which split the Christian Church for a diphthong. And it is only comparatively recently that the Churches, guided by the spirit of truth, have discovered the danger and futility of pegging their faith to verbal definition. In this matter at least we have learnt something. We can see, too, that the spirit of bitterness and persecution and personal animosity which has too frequently disgraced these controversies entails a more drastic denial of the central Christian truth that God is Love, than any conceivable intellectual "heresy." All this admitted: yet it remains true that, in *terms of the question as forced upon it*, the Great Church was quite clearly right. It may perfectly well be true that many "Arians" were far better Christians than many Orthodox. It may be true that the majority vote, here as elsewhere, was forced by the Emperor. Hundreds of similar statements may be true. Yet the fact remains that the answer given to the formula of Arius was the right one; and that had the Church given any other it would have stultified its own experience.

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It was, in form, a question about Christ and how He is related to God. And to that the Church gave the stupendous answer that He is "the only begotten Son of God and of one essence with the Father." Formally it is a statement about Christ; but in fact (as has been explained already) it is an affirmation about God. The technical details of the long debate are now only of academic interest; but the principles behind them are still vital, and may be put in contemporary terms. What Arius stood for was a point of view which has many distinguished advocates to-day among us, and might with some good reason describe itself as "the religion of all sensible men" outside the circle of professing Christians. He accepted "Christian ideals." He believed in a "spiritual" universe. But he could not interpret it in terms of Christ. He could not believe in a "personal" God at work and self-revealing in history. Hence he could say only that Christ was somehow "like" the Reality of the world rather than the Reality itself. He could not say that "God was in Christ." But this in the end reduces Christian faith to little more than a baffled aspiration.

What the Church in effect answered was that its faith, founded in experience, was not in an aspiration but a Fact—that a determinative event had happened which was to change the whole course of history. It said that the

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Kingdom of God had arrived—which was the Master's own proclamation—and had arrived in Him who thus proclaimed it. What this meant was that the living God who spake by the prophets, the Lord of history, had entered into man's world in Christ and was reconciling it with His own will. And this could be interpreted in no terms short of saying that God was in Him, "incarnate" in a human life and consciousness. In Him we are laid hold of by Reality. He is thus the incarnation and embodiment not merely of a spiritual "ideal" but of the Will which upholds the world.

This does not mean that Jesus was a man mysteriously endowed with omniscience; that would be irrational and therefore non-Christian. It does not mean that the Absolute Being walked our earth disguised as a human person; that would be mere pagan mythology. Nor does it mean that Jesus in the cradle was responsible for the Government of the universe—an idea which is to my own mind quite meaningless. Nor, once more, does it commit Christians to any particular scientific theory of the way in which "Evolution" works. The universe, as it seems, is still unfinished, and "creation" may be an unending process, as it may have been without beginning. What the Christian faith is committed to is that of all this Christ is the Interpreter and the instrument of God's

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redeeming work in it. In Him the Divine Purpose for the world is revealed and is being carried out.

The next best substitute for Christianity, widely accepted in our own time, is closely akin to the Arian position. It is often called scientific Humanism—a faith of which Professor Julian Huxley is the ablest and most charming representative. It repudiates the old-fashioned materialism and believes in a spiritual universe, in which Beauty and Truth are real, and human claims and ideals not illusory. It accepts the broad Christian moral principles and holds Christ Himself in high reverence. But it remains agnostic or negative about the existence of the Christians' God. It believes in spiritual values, but against the background of a world-view which varies between an extremely vague Theism and a frankly impersonal philosophy. This is a noble creed, held sincerely. I have great respect for many of its adherents. But I do not believe that it will hold water or survive the test of these drastic years. The attempt to build up the case for Humanism—i.e. reverence for human values and the sacredness of personality—on the background of an impersonal universe is every day becoming more difficult and will soon be compelled to acknowledge bankruptcy. It is becoming more and more doubtful whether we can defend a mid-way

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position between materialism and Christianity. There is only one intellectual bulwark against the impersonality of modern life and the ruthlessness of organized Power, and that is the conviction that God is in Christ. The Confessional Churches in Germany are proving it. Humanism on any other basis is fighting a desperate and losing battle.

But if the Christian faith in God is true and “we *know* Him in whom we have believed,” then we stand with our feet upon a rock. This is the faith which offers what we need most—optimism, courage and fidelity in trying to make civilization moral.

To believe in God is to dedicate our lives to the cause of His Kingdom in the world. There is no other way of loving God and serving Him but in consecration to His will for the perfected community of men. The second Commandment flows out from the first. “When a man turns to God desiring to serve Him, God directs his attention to the world and its need.”¹ Faith in God is a principle of action. Only in “doing things” can it be verified. It is the dynamic of a revolution which must transform the order of this world into conformity with the Eternal Will.

¹ Brunner, *The Divine Imperative*, p. 189.

CHAPTER IV

WHAT IS MAN?

I

SOMEONE has said that the preacher's real business is "to tell men and women what they are." It is surely what they most need to know. But what they need is not mere description; they can get that from the text-books of psychology, and most of them get a great deal too much of it. They need the proclamation of a Gospel. What they need is to see life exhibited in its true context and in its grand dimensions—its length and breadth and depth and height—against the background of the Eternal Purpose. Only so does it become significant. It is only when approached from that standpoint that we are even asking the right question. Men to-day have become afraid to ask it. For in an age which has ceased to believe in God, any honest answer to the real question is bound to be such that we can only hear it either with braggadocio or despair. The post-war world, whatever its other controversies has agreed that it is far better unasked.

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Ours is perhaps the first age in history to accept this conspiracy of silence about the goal and meaning of man's life. Its social habits are organized elaborately to protect men and women from the terror of being alone or in silence with their thoughts. The great majority of people in our age are frightened and miserable without noise and without some way of "filling up the time" with mental and emotional narcotics. The incessant activity which wears us all out—even Christians who should know better—is a half-consciously recognized escape-mechanism. The by-pass roads are crowded with people trying in vain to escape from themselves. Modern life is a concerted attempt to evade the impact of ultimate questions. And broadly speaking, the same may be said of contemporary intellectual tendencies. Here, too, we allow description and analysis to become a substitute for interpretation. "We find ourselves assuming that anthropology can take the place of a moral tradition, and that a knowledge of psychology can remove the need for an authoritative Church."¹

It must be something more than coincidence that an age which thinks and acts in these terms is the most impersonal in all history. The relation between economic conditions and mental habits is no doubt terribly complicated. No sane man now would lay down dogmatically that

¹ Michael Roberts, *The Modern Mind*, p. 7.

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either one of these two factors stands to the other as cause to effect. It seems clear that neither a Marxian nor a "spiritual" interpretation is adequate to the facts as we know them. The two influences must be reciprocal. It would be fantastic to argue that the thought and outlook of the modern West is not (to some undefined extent) conditioned by the economic patterns of this phase of industrial development. (Though even here we must allow full value to historical as well as economic factors. No two peoples seem to react in quite the same way to the same stimulus.) It is equally grotesque to deny that economic processes are influenced (again to an extent undefined) by what men want most and most often think about.

Now ours is an age when more than in any other persons are at the mercy of processes: "things are in the saddle and ride men." Nor can we expect it to be otherwise till we have regained some conviction about the true meaning of man's life and the value and destiny of persons. We are preoccupied with means and mechanisms: the ends of human activity elude us. Hence our political and economic chaos: hence, too, that paralysing scepticism which is tending to destroy any confidence in the power of man to break loose from his servitude.

Civilization has become dehumanized. If we

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avert the catastrophe which threatens us, then it is clear that the great task before us is to re-establish the claim of persons over the usurpation of things—to begin to build up a new social order in which the technique of the twentieth century will be employed to serve human ends. We must get man back into the centre. But we must first know what man is—not as abstract generalized “humanity,” but as concrete individual men and women. At present men and women are classified in arbitrary and exclusive groups. We ask whether they are rich or poor, white or black, French or German, whether they are Fascist or Communist, a hundred per cent Aryan, and so forth. That is to say, we think of men and women not in terms of their essential manhood, but as merely species of some other genus which we regard as more fundamental. We think of men and women as “adjectives” to some other and more substantive reality. So long as a civilization thinks in these terms it will continue to treat men as means to something else which seems more important, rather than as ends in themselves. And whether this something is mere material gain or some more “idealistic” programme of political or national ambition, this is none the less prostitution. But once we begin to think in real terms and ask what men in themselves are, then these differences are no longer substan-

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tive. They cannot affect the claims of men and women to be regarded as ends in their own right, and everything else as means to their fulfilment.

II

Thus, as was suggested in our first chapter, the dividing line in the conflicts of our time is not political or economic, but between two ideas of human nature and two interpretations of man's life. What is man? Is he but dictators' cannon fodder, a pawn of economic collectivism, a unit in a totalitarian system, or is he a spiritual personality? Only if the latter is the true answer can we properly speak about the "rights of man. If man is but the product of a process, he is the merely ephemeral expression of another more enduring reality—whether that be the "life-force," the "nation" or an economic and technical experiment—using him as its temporary instrument. There can be no sanctity in a mere tool. It is scrapped when it has served its owner's purpose or—as in Thomas Hardy's sombre phrase—when the President of the Immortals has finished with it. But if man is a being made for God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, then every man has a claim on our reverence. If God has clothed Himself in human nature and revealed Himself in Jesus Christ—if He dwelt among us and we beheld

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His glory—then human life is in itself *sacred*, an end to which all else must be sacrificed. “Know ye not that ye are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man destroys the temple of God him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are” (1 Cor. iii. 16-17 R.V.).

To get man thus “back into the centre” is the real Christian revolution. The primary business of the Christian Church and its most effective impact on politics is the proclamation of that Gospel. “In face of the widespread devaluation of man to-day, the Church has the high mission of recalling men to a sense of the potentialities of their being. In a world in which life seems cheap, in which the individual often appears to be nothing more than a cog in a machine, and in which multitudes fritter away a trivial existence in a succession of new sensations and frivolous pleasures, men need to be saved from despair and an aimless existence by the reminder that they have been created for responsible selfhood as the children of God.”¹

It may be replied that this is mere “sentiment”—a personal and subjective belief which it may be comforting to hold, but which makes no difference in the actual world. Many people, of course, do say this. But not, curiously

¹ J. H. Oldham, *The Church and its Function in Society*, p. 208.

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enough, those who are engaged in the working of systems which deny the right of persons in practice. None of the governments of the Power States have ever said anything so silly, nor the magistrates of a slave-owning Empire, nor those who wish to keep "labour" in its place, or to exploit the native populations. They have recognized their enemy when they met it. Normally they have tried to exterminate it, as concerted attempts are being made to destroy the Christian religion in many parts of the world at the moment. At other times they have offered dope to Cerberus. They have never suggested that it made no difference.

In our own time, the sacredness of life is frequently offered to us as a *substitute* for the traditional Christian position. There are many noble and high-minded people, who feel unable to call themselves Christians, and may even indeed be strongly in opposition to what they believe to be "Christian doctrine," who are nevertheless poignantly aware how the modern secular scientific outlook is proving destructive to human values and undermining respect for human dignity. They are eager to salvage the rights of persons and to reclaim a place for personality in the encroaching floods of materialism. They cannot accept the Christian faith in God, but its valuation of man is in their blood; and they hope to secure this by the half-way

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principle of "reverence for the sacredness of life." He that is not against us is on our part. Yet this seems to be one more illustration of the fact that only the Christian religion can sustain the essential values of Humanism. For in what sense can "Life" command reverence? and indeed precisely what is meant by it? If it means the "life-force" or *élan vital*, then we can only invest it with sacredness at the expense of its actual embodiments. For of life in this sense we must say what Englishmen so strangely enjoy singing about Time; life

like an ever-rolling stream
Bears all its sons away.

If it is this stream which is sacred, then the living things which at a given moment are carried along in its flux cannot be called so. They are but its momentary apparitions. To it they are and must always be sacrificed. Life must ever devour its own children. To invest "life" in this sense with sacredness is no guarantee that actual living people will be regarded, I do not say as sacred, but as having elementary human rights. The Christian valuation of man rests on faith in God and immortality. This faith may be judged to be true or false: but the Christian values stand or fall with it. It is this that has given human life its sanctity; and no substitute for it is available.

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We can test this both in theory and practice. Faith in God and faith in immortality are, from the Christian standpoint at any rate, two aspects of the same truth. The Christian hope is not of mere survival, but of life in communion with the living God. It is notorious that among our contemporaries the idea of personal life after death seems to become increasingly incredible. This, after all, is only to be expected. It decays with the waning of that faith in God without which it has no secure foundation. Once that conviction has grown dim it must be admitted that all the arguments from empirical science seems to tell against it. That life after death should seem incredible to the twentieth-century mind is but natural. What is odd is that it has ceased to seem desirable. There are, at least, a number of "intellectuals" who evince a dislike bordering on contempt for any idea of personal immortality. It is, they say, a mean and selfish notion; we are none of us so important as all that; the emancipated man thinks in wider terms. We perish but the race endures. Each of us must live out his little day, and make such contribution as he can to that great "partnership of the dead and living"; and then, when death closes our account, we live on in the "Undying Race." We can hope for no other immortality: but after all we ought not to want it.

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Now this suggestion rests on biology. It is the idea of the ever rolling stream applied to human life in society. And it is exposed to the same criticism. Christianity never has supposed that we can establish man's immortality within the confines of the temporal process, however long that may be extended, or without a God-centred view of man. The modern alternative breaks down in confusion. It does not work out even on its own basis or within its own "natural" limits. For in some future, distant but yet calculable, life will become extinct on our planet, and the race of men with all their achievements, the cloud-capped towers and gorgeous palaces, will perish, leaving not a wrack behind. Where will the Undying Race be then? In what sense can we speak of "living on" in a long series of other people's lives when those lives themselves have an appointed end? There can be no "communion of saints" if we presuppose that not only all the saints but the fellowship itself must be extinguished. If there is anything that is immortal it must be individual men and women, not a generic noun called the Race. No prolongation of life in time, however subtly the idea is worked out, can be a substitute for life eternal. No identification of the self with the future of others after I am dead is equivalent to God's gift of life. The Christian religion may be a vast mistake. But

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if so let us realize that there is no substitute which can offer us what it claims to give. It is that or futility—there is nothing else.

Thus this theory breaks down as a theory. It is even less satisfactory in its political and moral consequences. Inevitably it means that men and women can be given a merely instrumental value as a means to some end other than themselves. It is bound to result in a kind of moral Futurism. For the value of any given generation, to say nothing of any given individual, can consist only in its contribution to the “progress” or the “future” of the race. But if there be no Providence in history, then the “progress” is in fact merely change, and is moving to no moral consummation. Thus we should be justified, on this theory, in the sacrifice of whole generations, with all the present claims of men and women and all the inherent rights of personality, to some vague idea of a utopian future which, for all we know, may never occur. And that is simply downright immoral. There is no need to elaborate this point, for we have seen with our own eyes the influence of some such conscious or half-conscious theory on the ruthless course of the post-war revolutions. If the *Volk* or the State or the Party is immortal while individuals perish and are gone, then the sacredness inheres in it, and men and women can have no rights against it. They are merely means to

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its welfare and can therefore be sacrificed without compunction. Only if men and women live for God is there a valid ground for moral objection.

What I am trying to make clear is just this. The sacredness of life is a formula which fails to do what its prophets intend for it except by tacitly bringing back assumptions from the Christianity which they have discarded. Why decent men think human life sacred is because they think of personality as an end in itself, autonomous and inviolable; and the sacredness of non-human life derives by analogy from this conviction. But they think thus because they have been moulded—whether consciously or unconsciously—by the Christian ethical tradition. “Life” in itself yields no such conclusions. Empirical observation and induction can detect no such quality in the facts. The value attached to man by Christianity is not, as it were, inherent in the subject-matter, it is *conferred* by God’s loving will. “It is not of ourselves, it is the gift of God.” This is what “justification by faith” means. In the end there is nothing but the Christian Gospel which can safeguard the sacredness of life: and those who wish—as all humane men do—to come to the rescue of human right and dignity in an age of mechanized impersonality, must ask themselves whether they are not forced back on to this explicit recognition of

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what is implied in their own ideals.

For we cannot answer the question about man unless we will face the question about God.

III

For what *is* man? Certainly we ought to know! If any generation in history ought to know the answer, it is ours. We have unearthed the records of the past and traced the record of civilized society thousands of years farther back in time. We have explored the innermost recesses of human motive, temperament and character. Psychology, fiction, drama, and biography seem to have opened up every secret. It might be supposed that nothing is left unknown to us. Man's behaviour we know only too well. But what man *is*, that remains unknown to us, and his place in the Universe is still a mystery. And thus we misuse all our other knowledge. It is not less true because it is a truism that the inventions of our skill go bad on us, and instead of making earth a paradise they become instruments of evil. Man is unequal to his own achievements—the tragic paradox of the modern man, who still remains an enigma to himself.

“What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason! How intricate in faculty! In form and moving how express and admirable! In action how like an angel! In apprehension

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how like a God! But Shakespeare also gives us another estimate, "False of heart, light of ear, bloody of hand: hog in sloth, fox in stealth, wolf in greediness, dog in madness, lion in prey."² And both of these are equally true estimates. There is a contradiction at the heart of us; our finitude mocks our "immortal longings," the range of our knowledge accentuates our ignorance, we rise in one hour to celestial splendour and sink in the next to beastly degradation. With one glance we can see a being glorious as a Phœbus Apollo who seems but little lower than the angels; with the next, like Swift, the "most odious little vermin that ever crawled on the face of the earth." We can see St. John and we can see Judas; we can see St. Francis and Torquemada, St. Joan and Jezebel—and they are all "man." Which represents the real truth about us? This is the crucial question for our time.

The contemporary answer is ambiguous, varying from an exaggerated self-confidence to a pessimism which borders on despair. The post-war revolutions are founded on a crude belief in unregenerate man, coupled with inability to believe that men can be trusted with their own destinies. On the whole, the despair is predominant. This age is in the trough of

¹ *Hamlet*, II, ii.

² *Lear*, III, iv.

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a reaction from the flamboyant and defiant humanism of the secure far-distant nineteenth century. "Glory to man in the highest," wrote Swinburne in those days of buoyancy and confidence when trade was booming and the world expanding, and people supposed that more and bigger factories were sacraments of the "progress" of humanity. It sounded then with a fine titanic defiance and an echoing challenge to the religious die-hards. It sounds fly-blown in 1937. For that legacy of pride in man and the achievements of his skill and daring, that unlimited hope for his future, bequeathed to us by the Renaissance, is exhausted. It has proved a "flop": the balloon has been deflated.

To the last generation came the shock of Darwinism with its humiliating reminder of consanguinity with our poor relations. On us broke the horror of the world war, and the still more ghastly failures of its sequel; and the ground was well prepared for the psycho-analysts to tell us by what dark, beast-like lusts man's proud reason is blinded and perverted. On the top of all this came the economic slump, with the collapse of all material standards, the sharpening of national antagonisms, and a world-wide hopelessness and insecurity. "Glory to man in the highest" is just silly now. In a world in which millions of our fellow men are condemned to a sterile existence "on the dole," and

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hardly a breadwinner can be certain whether he will be in work to-morrow, we cannot believe that man is the "master of things." When the energies of the masses of mankind are absorbed in the mere struggle for existence, "to go to work, to earn the cash, to buy the food, to get the strength, to go to work *ad infinitum*," the "dignity of man" sounds like a bad joke. It is all too much suggestive of Fabre's caterpillars which continue to move round and round the dish in never-ending procession till they die. It is easy to feel as though there were nothing more "to it." Things are only too plainly masters of man. We have become the slaves of our own mechanisms. Life becomes daily more and more impersonal, and individuals count for less and less.

This effect of a mass-produced economy combines with the newly popularized knowledge of astro-physics and its numbing magnitudes to dwarf man's life into insignificance. Alone in a universe without God, lonely amid the ever-present crowds, the man of to-day feels frightened and defenceless. It is desperately hard for our contemporaries to take a high view about man, as the spate of modern fiction is evidence. As they say in America, man has been "debunked." It looks as though we have protested too much. The light of the Renaissance has failed. As a gifted writer arrestingly expresses

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it, the era that opens with Galileo ends with a young couple in a brick box, sitting on their hire-purchased furniture, "blue with funk" at the thought of having a baby.¹ The one way of escape known to most is to mingle deeper and deeper with the crowd and seek for a soul's healing at a cup-tie.

It is obviously from this gregarious instinct that the new Collectives, red and black and brown, draw their phenomenal strength and vitality. They seem to supply the fundamental need of a lonely, self-distrusting generation. They give some sense of power and security. They enable the lost and frightened individual to find himself in the sharing of a common purpose, which gives his life a new richness and significance. They do answer to a real need; and those who dislike them most should be the most ready to acknowledge their positive achievements in restoring self-respect and moral confidence to frustrated and despairing peoples.

Yet they offer no permanent solution. They attempt to solve the problem at too low a level. Thinking of man in purely human terms, with no transcendent and eternal background, making the Community its own centre, they succeed in rescuing men from isolation, but only too often at the cost of outrage to the fundamental claims of their manhood. The decisive factor

¹ R. A. Edwards, *World Adrift*, pp. 10-29.

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has been left out. Once more the ideal of "civilized" man—our substitute for the older word "Christian"—is found to fail without some reinforcements which it cannot supply from its own resources. We must go back again to the signpost and inquire once more, What is Man?

IV

Now the whole Bible is asking that question, and from every possible angle of inquiry. But it asks with God as its constant background, and thus reaches its characteristic answer. It is a library of human life, and at least as devastating in its realism as any "stark" contemporary novel. There is no disclosure of infamy in Freudianism, no animalism in pornographic fiction, which would make the Biblical writers lift an eyebrow. They have no illusions about man. There are parts of the Bible, as horrid little boys know, quite "impossible" in polite society.

The Biblical world-view makes no attempt to gloss over man's sub-human impulses (though it had never heard of "Evolution") or to minimize his dependence on and organic relation¹ to the natural order. Dust we are and to

¹ The only place I can think of in the New Testament where this relation is explicitly stated is by St. Paul in Rom. viii. But it is really taken for granted in the Parables, with their confidence in God as Creator.

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dust we shall return. The days of man are but as grass, he flourishes but as a flower of the field. Yet through it all presses the conviction that this life of man is not self-explanatory as it is obviously not self-redeeming. It tells its tales about men and women in the light of their response or disobedience to a Call which comes to them out of the world of Spirit. The background on which it weaves its tapestry is the conviction of a living God who is making man in His own image, summoning him to the loyalty of "sonship," and offering him the intimacy of fellowship as of children with a heavenly Father. What if the Bible and Christianity have all the time been right in their estimate? If man is indeed "made in God's image" that knowledge would give us what we most need—some real reason for belief in man, some grounds for trusting one another, some genuine guarantee for hope and optimism.

A religious view of man alone can do this. No naturalistic theory of human nature can sustain the tasks of a "civilized" community, for it cannot justify moral freedom. That we are second cousins to the monkeys we must accept with what grace we can; and when we observe the behaviour of our species, it puts no great strain on our credulity. But it is not specially good news. It is not a slogan for which men will march. The really exciting fact for men to

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hear is that they are called to be God's sons and daughters. If that is true, it has trumpet-notes in it. As its critics complained nineteen hundred years ago (Acts xvii. 6) this is a truth to turn the world upside down. This is the primary message of the Gospel.

A speaker at the recent Oxford conference complained that what we need is more optimism and less criticism of the existing order. We need to move out into a new climate, away from pessimism and distrust to a new faith in human possibility, a fresh power of trusting one another, and a confidence that all things can be made new. That is what the Christian world-view can offer. At such times as this it is inevitable that the Churches should find themselves in opposition to many trends in the surrounding world, and critical of the prevailing social order. Indeed they fail in their duty if they do not. They stand for an order which is not of this world, and if they merely agree with the majority and echo the views of the average sensual man they cease to make any useful contribution as well as betraying a God-given trust. Yet equally they are failing in their mission if they do not give mankind a living hope. Hope is the first fruit of our religion; and the way of hope, revival and recovery is to see man's life in its divine setting, and to hear the good news that we are God's children, called by God to com-

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munion with Himself. "We have not received the spirit of bondage but the spirit of sonship: we cry, Abba, Father." (Romans viii. 15.)

V

But is this credible to the modern man? There is, in the end, only one way in which this Gospel can be made convincing—that the Churches should themselves become societies in which people treat one another not in terms of income, class or privilege, colour, nationality or party, or any other accidental attributes, but as sons and daughters of the heavenly Father. Perhaps they have hardly yet begun to do this. Nevertheless, whenever Christianity has taken possession of the souls of men, true to itself and its own authentic genius, there has always been a genuine revolution in men's attitude to one another. We see the man next door in a changed light if he is indeed of the royal lineage, a son of God, "the brother for whom Christ died." We regard him then as in *Piers Plowman's Vision*: "blood-brethren we became there, and gentlemen each one." This is the real Christian democracy, the true commonwealth of men redeemed. This is what gives us reverence for persons.

How far, then, can this Christian "ideology"

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face the challenge of twentieth-century thought? "When I consider the heavens, what is man?" We ask it more insistently than the Psalmist, who know so many more stars than he did. When we consider astronomical time and the vast abysses of the stellar space which surround this flicker of conscious life, on the crust of a small evanescent planet—can it be that man really counts, that he is indeed at the centre of his world, that the Power behind things can be "mindful of him"? Surely if we call that Power "Father" and say that mortal men are His "sons," we are only using religious make-believe and projecting our wish-fulfilment on to the void of a non-moral Universe? It is easy to show that the Christian view of man has edifying and elevating consequences. But the question still remains, is it true?

Here there are two points to be borne in mind, the neglect of which leads to dire confusion. The first is, that the language of religion must often be frankly mythological. It cannot deal in equations and formulas for it is not concerned with things measurable; nor can it "demonstrate" its conclusions as the physical sciences can, by experiment. As was suggested in the previous chapter, poem and parable are its proper language, for it is concerned with the same kind of truth as that expressed by the artist and the poet. You cannot "prove" the truth

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of a poem. You can no more “prove” that God is our Father, or that man is capable of right and wrong, than you can “prove” that you love your wife—“prove,” that is, in the scientific sense. It rests on spiritual intuition. But this is a perfectly genuine form of knowledge, and it does not follow that truth apprehended by imagination and spiritual insight will not be congruous with our other knowledge reached by different paths of apprehension. Indeed it is the business of theology to interpret human experience in these terms, and thus to build up a consistent world-view. But its primary “data” cannot be the same as those which are handled by the natural sciences.

But half the confusion and misunderstanding between the scientist and the theologian has been due to a sort of inverted fundamentalism. The religious themselves have been too slow to realize that much of the language they use is meant to be pictorial, not that of a scientific textbook. Thus they have treated the Bible or the Creeds as though they were meant to be scientific statements, and considered as such they are obviously “untrue”—that is to say, for the purposes of science. And opponents have too easily got their own back. But the conflict has been little more than verbal. “When the atheist to-day denies that he has a Father in heaven, he is denying something which his ancestors never

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asserted; for he is interpreting in terms of physical time and space and matter words which were first used with no thought of such interpretation.”¹ Religion deals with an order of experience never to be measured by our pointer-readings. It is not for that reason less “real”; and indeed our own spiritual experience is the most certain element in our knowledge. Not, of course, that all such experience is to be accepted at its face-value. We must “test the spirits whether they be of God.” Notoriously we are all exposed here to the most disastrous forms of self-deception, and all such claims must be tested and verified. Religion *must* claim to be in touch with reality, and it stands or falls by the truth of its beliefs. But there is a legitimate place for symbolism in its apprehension and in its presentation. This is specially so for Christianity, which finds its truth embodied in a Person, and must therefore state its ultimate convictions and the content of its decisive experience largely in terms of a story.

This does not, of course, mean that the facts on which the Christian faith rests are legendary or unhistorical. Christianity has its roots in history. Because this is so, its faith from the first days has been set forth in the form of narrative: the Gospel is proclaimed in “the Gospels.” But this entails that God’s eternal activity is des-

¹ Michael Roberts, *op. cit.*, pp. 94-5.

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cribed in terms of temporal events. And this involves some recourse to symbolism. When the Christian says that God is his Father, or that the Son of God "came down from heaven to save us," he is using deliberately symbolic language to express that spiritual experience which is opened to him through Jesus Christ, and attested in the lives of believers.

The second point follows from the first. It is that religion is concerned with qualities rather than with quantitative magnitudes. Therefore the mere bigness of the Universe, though it should condemn a parochial theology, does not affect the Christian valuation of the worth of men's souls in the sight of God. That is appraised by quite different standards, and depends uniquely on Jesus Christ. Christianity holds that we do not know what man is till we have studied man in terms of Him.

Thus in one sense it must be admitted that the Christian world-view is incommensurable with any interpretation of the world which has its centre elsewhere than in Christ. The cardinal affirmation of its faith is that He is the centre of the Universe; it stands by this and it "can no other." We cannot start from physics and biology and arrive at last at Christian theology. We must not try to construct a religious world-view "out of the scraps left by the bio-chemist." Yet if Christianity is true, if

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its faith is faith in the real God, then (to repeat) it is the truth about life, not merely the truth about religion. We shall therefore in fact expect that in the light of it the rest of our knowledge will all come together into a significant and coherent unity. It must be able to make sense of life and interpret human experience as a whole better than any alternative explanation. And it must enable men to cope with life, intellectually, morally and spiritually, and perhaps physically too, more satisfactorily than its rivals. If it really is the truth about life, then by it human life must be fulfilled and its inner contradiction transcended.

Now Christian theology has not the least interest in drawing a veil over human origins. Not thus does it establish man's status. There is no valid ground for believing that the human soul is a "special creation." Indeed all such evidence as we have suggests that life and consciousness have "emerged" out of lifeless inorganic process. How this has happened, science must find out; Christianity has no inside information. We shall merely falsify our own position if we try to maintain some "spiritual" hypothesis about the origin of organic life as "more Christian" than a mechanistic, if the latter is found to fit the facts better. Things are what they are: and a genuine part of religious humility is docility in the face of facts.

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The Archbishop of York in his recent Gifford Lectures¹ bravely accepts a thorough-going "materialism" as the basis of a Christian philosophy. And I think it is true that on no other terms can we squarely and honestly encounter the creed of dialectical materialism which is our most serious philosophic rival. No mushy "idealism" stands the test. But Dr. Temple's concern in those lectures was to show that, starting out from those premises, and remembering that human life and all that it involves is a part of the world which seems to derive from those origins, we cannot find any adequate explanation of what the process as a whole means except in terms that approach Christian theism.

For man, who asks the question about the world, is himself part of the world which he questions. Whatever the processes of evolution, however vast and impersonal in scale and operation, man has emerged out of them. He is not outside his world, he is part of it. Whatever explanation we may give of it must be such as to account for man with all his still unfulfilled capacities: otherwise it is no explanation. Man is formed from the dust of the earth, his mother. He shares the bodily structure of other mammals with their biological instincts and propensities. Hunger and lust and self-preserva-

¹ *Nature, Man and God* (Macmillan).

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tion are at the basis of his mental life. To seek to deny such facts is merely silly. It is also false to the Christian philosophy. We do not establish man's spirituality by attempting to dematerialize the physical. He is neither an angel nor as the beasts that perish; and it is as mistaken from the Christian standpoint to think of him as an angel or pure spirit as it is to treat him as a beast of burden. (This principle is of the utmost importance, as we shall discover in the next chapter, for the understanding of Christian morality.)

This is one group of facts about man. But within those primitive endowments there have come to birth other capacities which we regard as specifically "human"—love and loyalty and constructive thought, our thirst for truth and our delight in beauty. Beauty and love are as much facts of the world as the radio-activity of the elements, the volcano, the cobra and the micro-organism. A true account of the world must find room for them. To rule them out, like the old-fashioned materialism, is just not to account for the world as we actually know it in experience. But still more distinctively and characteristically, there has emerged the capacity for worship. Before all else, man is a worshipper. From his earliest appearance in history he has been building his pathetic altars, stretching forth his hands to the unknown God. This

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is persistent through all the mazes of his social and religious record, through all its perversions and unlovely forms, its ignorance, its cruelty and terror—man's ineradicable quest for God, in whom alone he can find rest and fulfilment. If he cannot find God in heaven, he must fall down before a god on earth and deify some idol of his own making.

Whether we are theists or atheists, these are facts, and there is no denying them. The question is, how they are to be interpreted. It may be argued that religious history is the record of a colossal self-deception—the projection on to the void cosmic background of man's never-to-be-fulfilled desire for personal security in a wild world. That may be true; but it is, I think, impossible both to accept this interpretation and to believe that the world can be interpreted in any rational way whatsoever. If this is true, then all mental processes are equally due to a like subconscious bias, and the curt answer to it is *Tu quoque*. But a world in which spiritual experience is radically misleading and illusory is a world so fundamentally irrational that any account we may give of it is futile. Is it not more sensible to be less sophisticated and see whither experience will lead us?

Let us, then, begin by remembering that all growth, whether physical, intellectual or spiritual, is by way of response to stimulus—i.e. to

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some reality that impinges on the growing thing from the world outside itself. The philosopher Descartes described knowledge as like a blind man poking about with a stick until at last he strikes something solid. But that is just precisely what it is not. Objects are presented to our vision; we perceive, interpret and recognize them. Facts present themselves to our minds; influences play upon our character. If we are alive we move out to meet them and thus grow in knowledge and experience. The response is ours; but what we respond to is given to us rather than invented by us. (Within limits, of course, we may choose what to respond to out of all the stimuli that impinge upon us; and the training of character and the inner life is largely concerned with acquiring this discipline; but this does not affect the present argument). How does it come about, then, that man has been always moving out from himself to seek fulfillment in the worship of God? It may be the case that his religious notions have often been crude, licentious and bloodthirsty. But how are we to account for religion itself? If we are to make any sense of man's life, then there must be that at the heart of things which at once evokes and satisfies this hunger. Religion starts from God, not from man. The Initiator of his quest for God is God, "the rewarder of all them that seek him." This is the central claim of the whole

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Bible, from the great sentence in its opening myth, "Let us make man in our own image," to the affirmation of the Fourth Gospel, "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us."

So Christianity reads the whole story. Man is not (as he once hoped) a god, nor (as he now begins to fear) an animal. He is a soul, still in the making. The child of natural and organic process, a creature, dependent at every stage of development on powers not his own, he is claimed and called by spiritual Reality to accept the responsibility of selfhood and to become a "person" in response to it. Out of the agelong process of Creation the Father of spirits summons forth spirits capable of communion with Himself. At every stage in the growth of man God wills to reveal and impart Himself, so far as man can at that stage accept. (Hence "discovery" and "revelation" are two aspects of the same fact.)

It may thus be said that the history of mankind is the record not so much of man's doings as of God's activity towards men, and the ways in which mankind have responded to it; and this is how the Bible understands it. God, who is making man "in his own image," is ever seeking entrance into the mind of man, revealing Himself with increasing clearness as man becomes capable of response. In Christ, the God who at every stage is revealing Himself

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to the mind of man perfectly reveals Himself in man. There man is seen in his true character, truly himself in perfect response to God. Jesus Christ is the answer to our question. In St. Paul's great phrase He is "God's yes" (2 Cor. i. 20). All the aspiration of the human spirit "moving about in worlds half-realized" in its inextinguishable desire for God, all the intuitions of the mind of man as he seeks for some Eternal Communion in which he may at last find his home, are here vindicated and fulfilled. These were no illusory "projections" to shield man from the knowledge of his transience. They were indeed "promises of God," and in Christ "the yes came to be." In Him we know what man really is. He is the true, unique Son of God, through whom all men may become God's sons and daughters and inheritors of the Kingdom of heaven. "He gave them the right to become the sons of God."

Here, then, is man as the Christian religion sees him. In this world of space-time, this "vale of soul-making," still emergent, still unfulfilled, still conditioned by Nature and history with all their concrete tasks and limitations, he is fashioned in the divine image, called to a spiritual and eternal destiny—to receive through Christ the privilege of sons and citizenship in the Heavenly Father's Kingdom. Here is the true value of the common man. The inarticu-

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late inconspicuous multitudes of quiet, ordinary men and women living their small lives from day to day in unspectacular courage and fidelity, their loves and fears, their hopes and their anxieties—these are girt with a more-than-human dignity. They are embraced in a divine vocation. They are each and all called to be God's children—"heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ." No earthly state can claim their whole allegiance, for they are inheritors of the Kingdom of God. They may not be treated as means or instruments, for they are of infinite worth in God's sight. The sacredness of persons is God's gift: it derives from this, that "God has set his love upon them" and that they have been "bought with a price."

VI

It is thus that Christianity can believe in man. But before we can be assured of hope and optimism there is something more to be added. A religion that claims to meet real needs must offer power and inward liberation. It must come to terms with the evil in the world. It must have a remedy for that sin and selfishness which is constantly wrecking all our hopes and longings. Otherwise it is merely utopian with nothing to say to the world as it now is. The essential optimism of the Gospel is that it knows the answer to

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that problem. It claims that it is able to change men. And on no terms less realistic and less radical has it anything to say to the social order. The world can find no answer to its problem by the incessant production of programmes for changed systems worked by unchanged men. If the sheer force of resistance and evil which seems to frustrate all our best endeavours is merely a fact of the external world which must be accepted like the law of gravity, then indeed there is little ground for hope. But if it—or at the least a great proportion of it—is “from within out of the heart of man,” and if the hearts of men can be changed, then there is a valid foundation for optimism. The despair of the world to-day fundamentally is due to its scepticism about this. Christianity is the religion of hope because it treats sin radically and seriously, and because it knows how it may be remedied. It is not possible to believe in man or to think human nature can be trusted unless we can believe in the grace of God, able to set men free from fear and selfishness and the contradictions of their own nature, and establish them in inward moral freedom. We can only hold to faith in democracy if we believe that man can be redeemed and given victory over the power of evil. Else it is a creed almost as futile as rhetorical dictators declare. We cannot believe, in face of the world to-day, that

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human nature is capable of rising to those moral and spiritual qualities which are presupposed in a truly "human" world unless there are available resources of redemption, healing and renewal, regenerating men from within and sustaining them in faith, hope and charity. These are the gifts of God through Christ Jesus. We know that faith in man can be justified because we know that sin can be forgiven.

The leadership of the Western democracies is too much in the hands of elderly people, while insurgent youth is the life-blood of the Power States. Elderly people are too apt to insist that you "cannot change human nature." Christianity gives the lie direct to that. All Christian experience bears witness that average human nature can be changed, redeemed, transformed and lifted up to new heights of devotion, loyalty and sacrifice when the Spirit of God through Christ takes possession of it. "If a man is in Christ there is a new creation; the old things are passed away, behold all is become new." Christianity is the constructive religion, uniquely fitted to enlist the loyalty of all that is young, hopeful and promising in the adventure of creative liberty.

CHAPTER V

THE CHRISTIAN STANDARD

I

“MANKIND,” General Smuts declared, “has struck its tents and is on the march.” The words sound bitter eighteen years later. For one brief hour after the great calamity a brighter hope was beckoning in the heavens. It seemed as though mankind were being called out from the ruins of the city of destruction to find a new home in a land of promise. But humanity was exhausted and devitalized; its political and moral leaders failed; most of its youth and glory had been cut off; and it could not obey the heavenly vision. The peoples lost their sense of direction and their moral resources were inadequate to inspire the adventure of a high pilgrimage. They fell back into confusion and despair.

They went astray in the wilderness out of the way
and found no city to dwell in.

Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them.

Through years of perplexity and disillusionment they have been perishing for lack of leadership. They cannot return to the old world—that has gone; but they have no light to

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guide them to another. The skies are dark now and the stars have faded. By what pole can they now guide their march? The profound tragedy of the post-war world is its destitution of moral leadership. Nor can we deny the growing disappointment with the seeming failure of Christianity to offer mankind what it most needs.

The conscience of man has become more sensitive, at least to the extent that for the first time war is recognized by the common people for what it is—an obscenity and an outrage. Even to-day when the energies of all nations are being enlisted in favour of rearmament the peoples are longing to find the way out. Yet there seem to be no creative moral principles on which they can establish a new order. Our own people, tolerant and peace-loving, “carry on” quietly and bravely with undaunted spirit and unembittered mind; yet over them all hangs the dark cloud, the sense of impending and imminent catastrophe which the human will seems powerless to avert. Talk about moral principles seems futile, and we drift into ever deeper moral scepticism.

In private life the uncertainty is no less. Questions of conscience are infinitely difficult. We talk about the “problem” of patriotism, the “problem” of the family and so forth, alive to crippling doubts and perplexities at those points of conduct where, for our predecessors, duty

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was so clear cut and so imperative. Life to-day is becoming so complex, the results of any act so unpredictable, that moral choices are horribly hard to make, and good men are paralysed by indecision. When our fathers spoke of "doing the right thing" they were still implicitly taking for granted the broad principles of the Christian ethic or at least of that ethical tradition which runs back into Christian inspiration. Even if they did not live up to it, they had at least an assumption to work upon. If they failed, it was not because they lacked a standard. Our problem is to know what is the "right thing." The problem of good men in our own time is not merely how to live up to their standard, but whether there is a standard to live up to. Are there, in fact, any moral standards whether in public or in private life?

In the frightful confusion of the post-war years millions of people have become doubtful whether there are any fixed moral principles. The Victorian age misunderstood Darwinism in the sense of inevitable moral progress; it seemed to vindicate *laissez-faire* and to justify competitive exploitation. So our age misinterprets Einstein and the blessed word "relativity" to suggest that moral standards are "relative" and that none are absolute or final. The golden rule, as Bernard Shaw remarked, is that there is no golden rule. It is far from certain

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whether Mr. Shaw would wish to stand by his own phrase to-day. But it may serve as a highly coloured summary of a now widely prevalent moral scepticism.

In itself, the idea is as old as human thought, or as old, at any rate, as the human tourist. When people began to travel they discovered that the standards of their own tribe or home-town were the immoralities of their next-door neighbours. Herodotus, the first philosophic traveller, was enormously interested in this discovery. He delighted in the "comparative" study of the various moral and religious systems. Such a study may lead to one of two conclusions. If, like the Hebrews, men take for granted belief in one God of truth and righteousness, then the various ideas and ideals are approximation to or declension from the eternal principles of Truth and Goodness. Some real "comparison" is then possible, for they can be referred to some common standard. And if men think, as most men in fact do, that one system is "better" than another, they are taking for granted that there is a standard, however much they may verbally deny this.

Or it may lead in the opposite direction and suggest the totally sceptical conclusion that moral standards are merely "conventional," imposed by the law of the strong on the weaker, with no other basis than the self-interest of the

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group or the majority in power. This was the commonplace of the Greek Lecturers, and has become through Hobbes and Machiavelli the accepted creed of political "realism." Amongst ourselves this sceptical conclusion has been reinforced by other potent influences. "Comparative" anthropology and religion have been popularized in widely read "outlines," and have made it hard for the uninstructed reader to believe that there can be a "final" principle or an absolute standard of right and wrong. Further than this, not only professional students but every reader of the daily papers is now aware that the judgments of our "conscience" are in part—if not, as the Marxians think, wholly—conditioned by social and economic pressures, so that what, at a given moment, men think right depends, to some undefined extent, on the kind of society they live in. And this has confirmed them in their worst suspicions. The result of all this has been that moral scepticism is no longer an academic speculation or the secret of foreign offices and chancelleries, but the common property of the man in the street. But it is not, as it was for the "intellectuals," a thrilling adventure in emancipation: it lays upon him a burden of despair. In the general chaos of a disordered world it makes him feel that nothing can be done about it. Whatever we do the world will go to hell. There are no standards

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and there are no principles. The golden rule is that there is no golden rule. All we can do is to cultivate the garden till the eruption comes to overwhelm us. Moral idealism has been found out, and the secret of life is frank opportunism.

On this foundation we can build nothing. Along this road nothing but ruin faces us. There are, in practice, many situations in which opportunism is the right policy. We may say, indeed, in one sense that it always is. If we have a firm grip on the end we wish to realize, then it is a sign of moral steadfastness to take the opportunity as it comes, adapting our action to changing circumstances, moving now one way and now another, but with our eye fixed upon the goal. An absolute standard, as we shall see later, is not the same as an absolute *rule* of conduct. There cannot be any absolute rule of conduct; for no actions are "right" irrespective of circumstances. Opportunism in this sense only implies the ingenious adjustment of means to ends. But we are now dealing with something quite different; the idea that there are no *ends* for human activity—that is to say, no principles of conduct—beyond self-interest at a given moment. No man of goodwill would willingly believe that, unless he felt the conclusion forced upon him by the inescapable pressure of the facts. For we have seen this phil-

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osophy at work, and we know the ruin in which it has involved us. It has been the assumption of "real politics" in the dealing of sovereign states with one another. It received its condemnation in 1914.

Nevertheless we have tried ever since to rebuild the world on the same assumption—to establish an order of peace and security on no other foundation than self-interest. The attempt has failed as it always must. Honesty may be the best policy, but all human experience goes to prove that unless it also is much more than that, the brigand is always going to try his luck. And in a world organized for brigandage he will as often as not "get away with it." Peace is the highest interest of a nation, but our generation has seen enough to know that unless it is also much more than that, then peace is a chimerical ideal. But because we know no other foundation our world is ruled by the ethics of the jungle. There can be no possible hope of an ordered world, or of any escape from our panic and despair, unless we can find some final moral principle, some absolute standard of moral reference which we are all prepared to acknowledge, and by which we are all willing to be judged. The question is, where can we find it? Has Christianity anything to say? or is it, too, merely a relative morality bound up with a stage of social evolution which the twentieth

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century has now outgrown?

There are, as we know, notable exceptions to the moral leaderlessness of this generation. The inner significance of the new "mass-movements" is indeed partly a revolt against the moral inertia and futility which has seemed to be strangling the post-war world. Millions of men and women on the Continent have been caught into new dynamic movements, eagerly pressing towards a clear goal. Within their own limited objective, these movements have found a new sense of direction. On the Right and the Left men know where they stand. In them there is no ethical uncertainty. They have their own commanding moral imperatives, and shirk no sacrifice in obeying them. And to most of them it seems that Christianity is merely indecisive and backward-looking, hovering helplessly between two worlds and with no constructive guidance to offer. It belongs to the era of middle-class liberalism, and cannot survive the collapse of that economy. It is fettered to the corpse of a dead system. Looking always back to a *status quo*, it has now, like Lot's wife, become petrified. In an iron age it has nothing left to say. So they march, confident and convinced, under the banners of their new-found leadership, each party claiming that its own programme is the one final and absolute morality. If, like most people in our own country, we

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repudiate the claims of both parties, where can we find the creative moral principle which can satisfy men's hunger for leadership and inspire an order of justice, peace and freedom?

Christianity can offer nothing so slick and arrogant as these rival programmes. It is not a programme or a panacea. It is not the least good asking Christianity how to make the world more safe and comfortable on principles which Christ would repudiate. To a world which merely wants to be saved from the consequences of its own sin and folly, it can have nothing to say except "repent." It does not claim to make the world safe for the pursuit of merely selfish ends. It points men to the true ends of living. It "tells men and women what they are." If man, as the Christian religion teaches, is made for God and for life eternal, then the end and goal of human activity is not in man's will but in the will of God. This is the ultimate test of all politics. Neither wealth nor power nor prestige can justify any human group before the divine judgment in history. The one question is, Does it serve God's advancing purpose for His world? This—the central conviction of the Prophets—is emphatically endorsed in Christ's teaching.

No principle less radical than this can offer the world any sure guidance. Without this all is anarchy and confusion.

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Friend and foe were shadows in the mist,
And friend slew friend not knowing whom he slew.

It is obvious that the aim of good men will be to promote the welfare of their fellows. All morality must in some form or other have reference to social well-being. The rules of conduct which decent men acknowledge, and the general standards and principles which civilized societies try to foster, must be those which tend on the whole to the greatest happiness of the greatest number. But what can keep these standards from corruption? By what criterion can they be criticized? What can illuminate and guide men's vision of what is truly implied in man's welfare? For we do not know what man's true welfare is, indeed we constantly thwart and misinterpret it, if we forget that eternal purpose in which alone man can be fulfilled, and the deepest needs of his nature satisfied. To love our neighbour instead of loving God is to fail in love for our neighbour. They are the true servants of their fellows who wish for them to be conformed to God's will; as they are the true servants of their countries—though they may be regarded as rebels and traitors—who seek to mould their aims and their politics by the laws and principles of the Kingdom of God. On no other terms can there be true leadership. Else all is contingent and obscure. The attempt to shape the life of human

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societies by ends which are set wholly in this world will inevitably mislead and destroy them.

To assume that what men on the whole want is the true standard of what ought to be, or that an increase of power and comfort for the average man is the end of man's endeavour is not merely unworthy, it must end in ruin. Without some ultimate standard in religion, in the abiding spiritual reality, leadership must be either ineffective or disastrous in proportion to its confidence. The world to-day shows instances of both kinds. "Blind guides leading blind men." That was the haunting picture which the Master once sketched in the acid of His irony as He watched the contemporary scene. Shall they not both, He said, fall into the ditch? We can watch that happening before our eyes. A man," said Bishop Berkeley in a great sentence, "who has not much meditated on God and the supreme good, may no doubt be a thriving earth-worm, but he will be a sorry citizen and a sorry patriot."

Without the vision of God, peoples perish. To equate the standards of moral action with the well-being of the social group considered solely in terms of space and time, as a purely historical phenomenon, rules out any hope of genuine moral progress. The rough and ready psychological formula of adjustment to social environment is almost bound to fail for the

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same reason. It may make a man feel more confident and comfortable, at the price of becoming a standardized specimen; but by such a principle no man can be saved. It may strengthen the solidity of a group, at the price of making it more like an ant-hill. No moral principle can be called constructive which does not provide for the creation of rebels and the constant criticism and revision of the standards prevailing in society. But more than this, any such standards, however much unselfishness and sacrifice they often evoke, and however noble and disinterested may be their servants, are bound at last to prove self-destructive. If the frontiers of human society are wholly within the limits of this world, then this principle means in practice the deification of our own group. And the consequences of that we know too well. It means the return of anarchy and barbarism with the fundamentally immoral claim that every state is its own absolute, and that state-necessity knows no other law. Along all roads we arrive at the same impasse. If we pursue merely human purposes, with no higher principle to interpret them, we come fatally at cross-purposes and—if we do not destroy the human race—succeed at last in defeating our own ends.

Christianity offers the way out from this impasse by calling us back from false and

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frustrate aims to find fulfilment in the Eternal Will. It believes that God has a purpose for the world to which men and nations must conform or perish, and that therefore the final law for politics is in His will of righteousness and truth, in what Christ called the Kingdom of God on earth. This is the master-light of all our seeing. This is the one all-embracing purpose in which all our fragmentary aims are reconciled and man fulfils the law of his own being. Here is the true way of life for all men. Here is something real and creative to which the world may turn from its illusions, from the futile chicanery of politics and the subterfuges of diplomacy—a reality by which men can live. And if God has this purpose for mankind and has revealed it to us in Christ Jesus, then is anything comparable in urgency with the world's need, in its panic and despair, to rediscover that way of life and in its service find peace and freedom?

But it cannot be offered to it in a formula. Christianity has no ready-made system which can be "applied" to an unconverted world. It does not suggest that "Christ's moral teaching" could be put into practice to-morrow so that an age of power and exploitation would then be safeguarded from the fear of war and we could all grow rich and comfortable. "Christ's moral teaching" presupposes that men have learnt to

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live for new ends and have come to accept His view of life in its relation to the Father's will.¹ Thus it can only be "applied" by people whose minds are illuminated by God's truth and their wills transformed by the touch of Christ. It is meaningless without His religion. The primary business of Christianity is not to be providing a new programme, but to be creating new men. It can and it does, where it is accepted, work itself out in new human relationships and embody itself in a changed social order; and of this there will be more to be said later. But its primary business is to change men—so shaping their convictions and desires, so illuminating their minds and spirits that, coming to love that which God commands, they may by their activity in the world become the instruments of His purpose.

II

That this is the task of the Churches needs no argument. What at present is less frequently acknowledged is that this is the true task of education. The conflict between the Christian world-view and its rivals is being fought out in the home, the railway carriage and the smoking room, and wherever men meet and talk together,

¹ For a discussion of what I can here only suggest in a sentence I should like to refer to Dr. A. D. Lindsay's pregnant addresses on *The Moral Teaching of Jesus* (Hodder & Stoughton).

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and in the secret places of our own hearts. But most of all it is being fought out, in our own country, in the schools and colleges. They are the centre of the religious "front." A man may be a magnificent disciple and a radiant focus of Christian influence, even though he cannot read or write; there are many such, and they are the salt of the earth. But in the kind of age we are now living in, it will become every day more difficult for the ordinary man and woman to live faithfully to the Christian life if the general world-view of thinking people becomes agnostic or frankly pagan. If higher education in this country acquiesces in a merely this-world and positivistic theory of human life, we shall not very much longer need our Churches. In a critical age like ours, says Sir Richard Livingstone, a habit will not outlast a generation if its intellectual basis is undermined.¹

After I had written the previous section I read a remarkable letter in *The Times*²—a gleam of gold in the waste of the silly season—by Mr. Cunningham of St. John's, Cambridge, which goes straight to the heart of the question. Since it appeared in the midst of the summer holiday it may have been missed by a number of readers. But it was so courageous and refreshing that I make no apology for quoting it. Speaking of

¹ *Greek Ideals and Modern Life.*

² *The Times*, August 6, 1937.

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certain recent expressions of dissatisfaction with the Universities which had appeared in the correspondence columns, he says that "the real problem lies deep in the prevailing conception of education."

"We University teachers," says the writer, "set before ourselves two main purposes: (1) the advancement of knowledge by teaching and research, and (2) the training of leaders for every branch of national life. In each of these our outlook has been materialist. We have assumed that greater knowledge and control of natural forces is as a matter of course a benefit to society, and that a closer attention to existing human and economic factors will lead to progress. Human nature is taken to be an unchangeable element.

"But our students are missing a sense of values and purpose. They begin to feel that finding a career resolves itself into seeking a niche in a society which we assume to be permanent, but which actually is in danger of being destroyed by the very forces which we are teaching it to use. They fear that we University teachers are the blind leading the blind, and they vaguely hope that we shall not all fall together into the ditch. This is the real meaning of the suspicion with which both student and parent look at us. What remedy? The Minister of Labour was reported in your columns last week

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as saying that 'the greatest possible service is being done to the nation at this critical time by those who insist upon the necessity of listening to God.' Education gives to youth the freedom and purpose which it seeks when it brings mind, will and emotion under the single motive of discovering God's plan for the world. When we at the universities accept the responsibility implied in this conception of our task, we shall be helping to release those deeper forces in human nature which can reverse the drift to chaos, and to supply the Empire and the world with new leaders who can bring in a new order."

Now I know far too many dons and schoolmasters who are dedicated to precisely this aim to accept these strictures without wide reserve. But the letter does raise in a striking way the problem of education in a Christian country, or a country that wishes to continue Christian. Too many people at present are attempting to be Christians in their personal religion, while remaining relativists or pagans in their intellectual assumptions. This must make of the inner life a chaos which is reflected in a chaotic world-order. Twentieth-century life has no centre as twentieth-century knowledge has no centre. For since the school—rightly—repudiated the controlling censorship of the Church, our knowledge is fast becoming a great jumble of casual, unco-ordinated facts—rather a burden

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than the key to freedom. But it is the true task of education to “convert the eye of the soul” to a world-view which interprets life as a unity and by the harmonizing of the self gives inner victory and emancipation. In other words, no education is worthy of its name or its vocation which has not religion at the heart of it. This is once more becoming widely recognized even by teachers who—to their distress—cannot find a religion to believe in.

But what is meant by religious education? It is, for example, wholly illegitimate to import theology into economics or biology or Greek syntax. There is no such thing as a “Christian mathematics. Each branch of knowledge has its own laws, and if we accept the Christian assumption and believe that the world we are studying is God’s world, then the principles of each field of study must be respected, and even revered, as parts of His providential ordering. Such respect is part of the religion of the Christian student or researcher. He must never try to force a conclusion in the supposed interest of “edification.” There is no such thing as a Christian arithmetic. But there is a total Christian world-view—an interpretation of life as a whole based upon the Christian understanding of God and man as revealed in Christ. There is a God-centred view of the world and a God-centred theory of human

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nature. And the real task of religious education is to help people to weave all the threads of life and knowledge into that pattern—to discover the purpose at the heart of life, to learn through all its infinite varieties the manifestation of the Eternal Will and to make of their own lives a consecration to it.

Take, for example, the field of science, whether that of the physical or the social sciences. Here it would be impertinent for the layman to decide how far the conclusions of scientists represent, or are claimed as representing, the real truth about real things, and how far they are merely statistical, that is to say, working equations for the prediction and control of events. But it is admitted that their main interest is to acquire the ability to control. This can be of no help to humanity, and may (as we know) do it infinite harm, unless we are guided by a clear conviction to what end and for what purposes such control is to be rightly exercised. Religious education will not try to “cook” the results of statistical inquiry: but neither will it assume that “greater knowledge and control of natural forces is as a matter of course a benefit to society.” It will teach men to ask: What is God’s purpose for human life and society in the world which we are now learning to control? What are the true ends of human activity? and so to apply the power of control as far as may

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be, to the furtherance of those ends. It is only thus that the sciences can claim to be genuine servants of humanity—if they are dedicating their discoveries to God's purpose for the life of man. Thus economics will not be Christianized by the importation of religious language into its seemingly arid statistics. But it can never be anything but pagan unless it keeps steadily before it the spiritual destiny of man and the rights and claims of persons made for God, and tries to discover how men may use the knowledge of economic laws and principles for the fulfilment of the life of man as it is in the purpose and the sight of God. That would be to offer it to His will. Such a vocation needs a twofold equipment. It requires the humility of prayer, the constant turning to the vision of God in meditation, penitence and worship, that mind and heart may be open to His leading. It needs disciplined thinking and research, and exacting technical expertise. Only by this intertwined effort can we hope to discover what is God's will here and now in our given situation. Unthinking piety cannot save the world any more than irreligious knowledge.

III

But as soon as this is said we begin to realize that the idea of religious education has

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broadened out from the school and university to become co-extensive with the Church itself. This, I think, is the right way of looking at it. For it would be utterly impossible for any one Christian, however gifted, to satisfy such tremendous requirements. It is the task of the whole Church universal which is in ideal and partly, at least, in fact, the fellowship of men and women dedicated to the doing of God's will in the world, that His Kingdom may come on earth as it is heaven. Of this Church religious education thus conceived is an aspect 'or embodiment; and as things are to-day perhaps the most important. If the Church is to redeem the world no less than this is the vast task before it. Essentially it is the task of laymen actually doing the world's work.

This is how the Church is meant to operate. It is not a society of parsons. A clerical Church is a contradiction in terms. If God is the Creator of the world, and if through Christ He wills to redeem it, reconciling it with His own will at the cost of the Passion and Crucifixion, we cannot suppose that He is mainly interested in the preoccupations of ecclesiastics. Every Communion service is a protest against any merely pietistic or clerical idea of Christianity. For it brings material things, food and drink, and all the activities and satisfactions of man's inherited and instinctive impulses to be

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redeemed by the love of Christ and offered in consecration to the Father. It is the constant symbol and instrument of the Christian vocation in the world. For this is not, in the bad sense, other-worldly: nor is it a service of mankind based on merely human calculations and in terms of average human nature. It is the transformation of the world through self-dedication to the will of God. Its goal is in the order of spirit: its light and strength draw from the eternal; its tasks are set in this world of time. It is the redemption of the social order till it becomes conformed to God's will and the "body" of Christ's spirit in the world—this world, with its concrete claims and opportunities and its actual resistant material. It needs the life of earth for its exercise: its hope and goal are in the life eternal.

All this implies that the Church's task in the redemption of the social order rests with its members in their daily work, in their various callings and professions, seeking to bring their fragment of the world into conformity with the will of God. The costs and difficulties are immense. No glib phrases must disguise this from us; and this is emphasized in the next chapter. We all need the faith, prayer and encouragement of our fellow adventurers in the same enterprise. We also need the specialized knowledge of the various technical factors involved,

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and it must be part of the business of the Church to supply this equipment for its membership. This does not mean that somebody in Dean's Yard ought to publish official Church views on sociology and economics. It does mean a concerted effort of research by the membership of the Churches as a whole; such work is indeed already undertaken on an international and inter-Church basis by the "Life and Work" Council at Geneva, and inter-denominationally in this country by the Social Council of the Christian Churches. All Christians, according to their opportunity, ought to be eager to share in this study. Yet it is equally clear that the Church's first business is to release the guidance and the power of the living Christ in the hearts of men, and to keep the channels of man's spirit in sensitive response to the Divine Will. Certainly it will not fulfil its function by becoming a society for social study, to the neglect of its primary vocation, or turning itself into a baptized Faculty of the London School of Economics.

IV

In saying this we have found, I think, the answer to a very frequently expressed objection against the moral claim of Christianity. In an evolutionary-minded age, the idea of an absolute or final standard is exceedingly hard for many

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minds to accept. The objection is raised in two different forms. Insistence on a final revelation given once and for all two thousand years ago seems at first sight to be incompatible with the whole idea of historical evolution which the modern man takes for granted. And if the claim is made that Jesus of Nazareth who lived and died in a distant time and place, under totally different conditions, in a society so unlike our own, is the final authority for conduct in our complex twentieth-century world, that seems to the modern mind quite untenable. Much of the difficulty which is felt here probably rests on misunderstanding. But succession in time is really quite irrelevant. If beauty or truth have once been revealed, let us say, in a supreme work of art, then they do not cease to be true or beautiful a week or a year or a thousand years after. The fact is rather that the more we study these revelations and embodiments, the more beauty and goodness we find in them. Jesus Christ is "final" in this sense—that the nearer we get to Him, and the more we know Him, the more truth and reality we find in His yet unexhausted revelation. We do not yet nearly fully understand Him; it may be that we are still but just beginning; and St. Paul's great phrase sums up the whole position when he speaks about *growing up into Christ*. (Eph. iv. 15.) Moreover, the main burden of the criti-

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cism makes a false assumption about the claim.

It assumes that the authority claimed for Christ is that of the Author of a moral *code* once and for all laid down and defined. If that were the claim I should share the criticism. Moral *codes* must be always out of date. If Jesus of Nazareth had been a legislator laying down laws for human conduct, then of course those laws would long have become obsolete through the changing circumstances of history. A morality which claims to be "final" in the sense of laying down exact prescriptions how men and women must behave, in situations which have not yet happened, is out of the running from the word Go.

But Christ Himself refused to be a legislator. He was not laying down rules for conduct whether for His own age or for ours—an age which He could not possibly have foreseen. He was not proclaiming new rules for conduct, but a new interpretation of life and a new vision of moral possibility when the life of man is lived in the light of God. He reveals an absolute standard of living; but this is something altogether different from absolute and final rules of conduct. A standard is not the same thing as a rule, and indeed the two are frequently incompatible. This is a point of the utmost importance; for half the confusion about Christian ethics in the popular mind at the

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present moment seem to be due to a failure to appreciate it. The authority of the Christian way of life is not in a code but in a living Person; and the way to answer the question, Is this "final"? is to face Him honestly and then ask again. As my friend, Eric Abbott, has finely said:¹ "Some time or other in his life every man must kneel before Christ if he is to be fully a man."

This is the first form of the objection, and it cuts very deep into Christianity. I have dealt with it, so far as I am able, in my book, *The Relevance of Christianity*,² to which I must venture to refer the reader for a fuller discussion than is here possible; and perhaps better, certainly more briefly, in an essay contributed to another volume.³ At present I cannot add more to these. But it is sometimes raised in another form. It is felt that to base the principles of conduct on an unchanging and Eternal Will must paralyse moral discovery and enterprise. For this, it is said, is a static formula in a constantly changing and "evolving" world. (Of course the world itself does not "evolve," but we must not be side-tracked into that discussion.) But this also, surely, rests on a fallacy.

¹ In an issue of *The Student Movement*, to which I cannot now trace the reference.

² Ch. IV.

³ *The Christian Faith*, edited by W. R. Matthews (Eyre & Spottiswoode), pp. 300 ff.

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It appears to assume that the will of God for man is something fixed, defined and clearly known both in its detail and in its implication; and both the implied assumptions must be false. If Christ is right, it is the will of God to call all men and women to Himself, to perfect obedience and love and fellowship, and thus to the realization and fulfilment of all of which persons are capable in redeeming communion with the living God. But "it doth not yet appear what we shall be." Every step in obedience and response opens up the vision of further possibilities in the movement of men towards the knowledge of God. This is, in other words, the vital principle of creative moral growth and discovery, both for society and for individuals. In Christ we know what God's purpose is; but we have yet to learn its full meaning, and this we shall never do in space and time. We know, once more, in essence and principle, His will for humanity and for the world. But we do not know that will in its detail; we cannot assume, for example, that we know what His will is for Europe at this moment, or for a new settlement in Palestine. If we may rightly speak of God's will, there must be in it an element of real contingency. His immutable purpose for His world must involve that what He wills men to do must change in terms of varying situations. This is not caprice or inconsistency, neither is it a mere

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static formula which perpetually requires the same conduct. It is the principle of creative action.

v

To regard our world as its own centre, and man's life as sufficient to itself, is the way of sterility and chaos. This, which it is now the fashion to call secularism, is what the New Testament writers have in mind in their warnings against loving the world. The worldly mind is the way of moral death. The world, because it is God's world, is good; but it depends utterly on Him, and apart from God it has neither worth nor meaning. To seek for its centre within its own processes cannot but lead to futility and despair. So, too, man's life has all its hope and value in its relation to the Divine Purpose. The self-centred life is moral anarchy both for society and for individuals. So long as we seek within man's own resources either for his moral re-creation or for the final goal of his activity, nothing but disillusionment awaits us. This is what the modern age has been attempting, and hence all its confusion and despair. It is profound dissatisfaction with this secularized and man-centred morality which inspired the letter from which I have quoted. And there are to-day numbers of men and

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women who are being led by the discipline of experience and their own reflexion on the world's drift to political anarchy and moral helplessness, to ask themselves what is really implied in any belief in the "good" life, and whether their own convictions and ideals do not, in the end, involve faith in God.

If it is from God that our life derives its meaning, then in His will is the one final principle by which all human ends can be measured. In His will is the true goal of all endeavour, the one absolute standard of righteousness, the reward and crown of all moral striving. As the life of man moves out towards God, out from its own self-centred moral chaos, it is thus moving towards its true centre, the eternal Ground of "all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works," and the Source of illumination and renewal. Here is the ultimate standard and conviction, beyond all the contingencies of history, which must be the pole-star of the human pilgrimage. Here is the inexhaustible Reality in which there is stored for all men and nations a fulfilment "passing man's understanding." Here is the common goal of man's journey—such that, as men accept the will of God as the acknowledged standard of their politics, each will find his own true fulfilment and all their fragmentary aims and purposes will be reconciled and raised to a higher power in the

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perfect Purpose of the Divine Kingdom. In obedience to God's will is peace and freedom. Not the freedom of anarchic self-expression with no genuine self to be expressed, but the only freedom worth having—to realize our highest possibilities and to be what God wills us to become.

If this is a “static” or repressive principle, then the vocabulary has broken down and words have ceased to mean anything at all. But it must be emphatically repeated that to find our standard in the will of God does not imply a programme or a formula to be put into operation “when the bell rings.” No genuine moral authority is fool-proof. When we speak about “God's plan for the world,” we are not thinking, as men might in Whitehall, about a Plan A or Plan B ready to work when the Government gives the order. There is no book of the words with an index in which we can look up the given instance, and so find out His “plan” for unemployment or the conditions of a Western Pact. It is not a slick solution of that kind—and if it were it would have no moral value—but a constantly unfolding revelation to be received by spiritual discernment and the consecration of men's hearts and minds. To know God's will for a given situation involves the most careful exercise of thought, and for some

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the discipline of exacting study; but still more, spiritual dedication.

No Christian can doubt that the guidance of God is given to those who wait upon Him in humility and seek to know "what He would have them do." But because it is guidance given to mortal men, there is no *infallible* spiritual authority—whether in the Bible or the Church or the inner light of the individual conscience. We must be vigilantly on our guard against identifying some proposal for the amelioration of the world in which we ourselves happen to believe with "God's plan" or the "Christian solution." To seek God's will involves the sincere wish that our own ideas (as well as our "sinful desires") shall be in continual process of conversion from our ignorance to God's light and truth. Christians may very often make mistakes. They may fail in moral and spiritual insight; they may even do harm, from the very highest motives, through lack of proper technical information. All this is but natural and inevitable. Yet we cannot doubt, because God is "faithful and true," that those who in faith, sincerity and penitence will to do His will shall come to know. As we put one foot before the other, we may trust to be shown the next step on the path.

CHAPTER VI

STANDARDS AND COMPROMISES

I

“ ONE step enough for me ”—but is it enough? That is, no doubt, the authentic, trustful attitude of personal religion and discipleship. But is this the whole “ Christian solution ” to our political and social anarchy? Can we not offer at least a five years’ programme,” with some limited yet clearly defined objective? Otherwise all this grandiose language about the plan of God for the world seems to peter out in a mere empiricism little more effective than any other suggestion. Such criticism is hard to meet in form, but it is radically false in substance. The whole point is that amid the world’s confusion of conflicting aims, passions, and false values, its moral paralysis and its despair, the Gospel calls mankind to that Reality wherein is life and truth and power and healing. It is as the sun shining through the fog and purging away the dark miasmal vapours. It calls mankind to hear that truth and follow it; to repudi-

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ate its false gods and sham values, and the selfish aims and illusions that enslave it, to repent and believe the good news of the Kingdom. If it will seek first God's Kingdom and righteousness all the other things will be added. The Gospel is radical rather than reformist. But surely it can at least succeed in indicating the broad principles of reconstruction and the main objectives of a Christian policy? Surely it ought to be possible for Christians to know what in particular they stand for, and what they should try to get done in the world if they take God's law for their law and follow Christ as the Lord of living? It is possible to be so radical as to have nothing useful to contribute at any particular point of human need. What does the Christian standard mean in practice?

Here we arrive at a really crucial question. Enormous numbers of people in this country firmly if inarticulately believe that the Christian way of life is the true way, and the Christian moral standards the true standards. But they are daunted by the profound misgiving—which is perhaps more than anything else holding up a big-scale revival—about the practicability of the Christian ethic. They have heard it said that to follow literally the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount might mean that millions of people would starve to death and civilized life break down altogether. They cannot see

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how the Christian principles can be applied in the world as it now is. But a standard that is permanently inapplicable seems to be merely of academic interest. Personally, I do not endorse that sentence. I believe that an impracticable standard is needed to save a "workable" morality from the fatty degeneration of complacency.¹ But anyone can see that on the face of it there seems small use in offering men a standard which can never be applied to anything.

Moreover, amongst Christians themselves there are known to be wide divergences of opinion about the actual content of Christian conduct. Notoriously the Christian peace movement is split from top to bottom on this very question; and the point at issue is but a special case of a cleavage that runs all through Christian thinking. Summarily, it may be thus stated. Is there an ideal Christian social programme—what is sometimes called a Christian sociology—to be deduced from Christ's life and teaching which could and should be accepted and acted on if only men were good enough and brave enough; or is this a complete misunderstanding of what the Christian life really means?

It is raised in its most acute form by Pacifism

¹ Cf. on this Professor Whitehead's remarks in *Adventures of Ideas* (Cambridge University Press), p. 18, and Reinhold Niebuhr in *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics* (S.C.M. Press), Ch. IV. ("The relevance of an impossible ethical ideal.")

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with its challenge to "take Jesus Christ seriously." Here, it seems, is a clear-cut Christian issue. Here is a chance for Christians to lead the world, to show a faith more direct and simple than the sophistications of diplomacy, to cut through the tangle of hesitancies and pretexts and the justification of the unjust argument—to take Christ at His word and follow Him. Here at least we seem to touch bottom. Nor may any Christian decide to reject the Pacifist position without feeling humbled and rebuked by its fidelity, courage and directness. It is certain that no Church can be healthy unless it is engendering and fostering such Franciscan-like spontaneity of literal "following" among some of its members. Christian Pacifism sounds self-evident: yet it is clear that there is another side to it. For it may be urged with equal sincerity by Christians equally qualified to speak, that this is the surest way to go to work to defeat the aim which all Christians share and which all believe to be the will of God. The world is not so simple as all that, it may be replied, and there are no such short cuts; what has to be done in the world, as things now are, is to build up painfully and slowly the edifice of collective security and the organization of a common law. In that task all Christians who love peace ought surely to be leaders and protagonists. But this seems, as things now are, to involve armament; and

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if you are denying the moral right to arm, if you refuse to take part, in the last resort, in the final sanctions of collective peace, then you are helping to weaken your country in playing that part of constructive peacemaker which as a Christian you are always urging on it.

I do not wholly accept that argument. If it is accepted, it seems to follow that in certain circumstances it is right for Christians to do un-Christian things for Christ's sake, and to try to obey God's will in the world by methods which are opposed to the Master's teaching. Nor can we ever escape from His warning that you cannot cast out devils by Beelzebub. This is indeed an appalling dilemma. I do not propose to attempt to resolve it now; I have taken it merely as the clearest instance of the crucial decision which Christian thought must face. It seems as though, in a world so organized, in which the forces against us are so mighty, there is almost nothing that Christians can do. The constant cry is, What can we *do* about it? We are constantly finding ourselves in situations in which there seems to be no choice left open to us other than the choice between two evils. That is so. On most of the international issues that is the only choice that is open. And when people are in such situations then it is important to realize that the lesser of the two evils is the right choice. Thus, for example, a general war in Europe is quite

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obviously a greater evil than even the slaughter of the Abyssinians or the horrors of civil war in Spain. If we are really confined to these alternatives, there is no doubt which is the least evil choice. (If we had acted otherwise than we did at an earlier stage in these ghastly episodes, we should not now be in this predicament. But though we may be repentant and remorseful that does not affect what is right in the predicament in which we are.)

II

All this is cold comfort for Christians! Are we so imprisoned in the mesh of evil that we *cannot* be faithful to the Master's teaching without leaving the world altogether? And if so are those critics right who call it so impracticable as to be quite useless? In an earlier age, in an anarchic period of demoralization, anarchy and barbarism, Christians felt that the Christian way of living was utterly impossible in such a world. What they did then was to withdraw from it and construct their own ideal societies within the protective walls of the cloister, in which they could live by the Christian standards and rule their lives by the counsels of the Gospels. And it was far better for the world that the Christian life should thus be exhibited to it, in an object-lesson in a "prepared medium,"

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than that it should be utterly overwhelmed. It may well be, too, that in our own day the living Church can only come alive within the amorphous body of "the Churches" by the springing up of some similar experiments for men and women living under rule—but in the "world" rather than in "religion"—in some kind of Franciscan third order. But we know the danger of the Monastic solution, both for Christians and for the world. Is there no other for us in this iron age? Are we driven altogether to despair of being able, as Christians, to do anything which is not *either* utterly ineffective *or* a compromise with the methods of the world?

Some Christian thinkers on the Continent feel the weight of this pressure so severely that they have recourse to desperate expedients. It has seemed to them so utterly impossible to Christianize the prevailing social order, that they sustain themselves by the reflexion that this was never the true task of the Church. Its concern is with the Word of God, and its task is to redeem men from the world by inward obedience to the faith of Christ. The "world"—the organization of human power and the force and law embodied in the State—is indeed part of the order of Creation, but does not belong to the Kingdom of God's grace. It is either to be "received" as God-given, as the matrix of the life of Spirit, or accepted like a

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natural fact. It is no part of the Church's work to change it. Some of them go the extreme length of arguing that within the sphere of political organization the law of Christ has no applicability. Most of us, if we lived in Central Europe, might be tempted to share this point of view. And there are a few politicians who would be much happier if we did here. But almost all English-speaking Christians now believe that in some form or other the Church's task is to redeem politics, and to transform the order of the world into conformity with the Christian standard. But we still ask, What can Christians *do*? Even in a still professedly Christian country in which Christian opinion still exercises a strong if not a determinative influence—even for us the problem is unavoidable. We seem to be so far caught in a system which no amount of goodwill and idealism appears to be able effectively to alter, and from which all the ways out seem blocked, that we wonder whether we can do anything.

Now this for most of us is a new experience. We have not before felt in this country—what other peoples had long ago found out—the strength of these sheer resistant forces, due to no deliberate human will, which limit so drastically our range of action. To us the discovery has been unmanly; it may hearten us, therefore, to realize that others have travelled the

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same road before. It is the commonplace of the Bible. It comes from a world of historical determinism. The Jew was hammered by sheer historical processes which left him scarcely any freedom of choice. At no time was there anything he could do to change the trend of the mighty world forces by which his life was on every side conditioned. Within that iron frame his faith was moulded; and he did save the world by his fidelity, making possible what, in God's providence, was subsequently to come forth from Judaism. He had never any illusions about the might of the evil in the world; and the background of our Lord's thought and teaching (as presented at least in the Synoptic Gospels) is the consciousness of these satanic forces from which through Him God would bring deliverance.

We to-day can appreciate more readily than the pre-war students of the Gospels that "tragic" note of crisis and catastrophe which sounds so clearly in His recorded teaching. In an earlier time we could not understand it. We believed that the salvation of the world must come by way of gradual development. The "apocalyptic" strain in the Gospels, so far as it was not due to the evangelists, we were apt to regard as Jewish ideology, to be translated into our own language of growth and evolutionary progress. We are learning now to

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see more deeply into it. We can understand now, as we could not then, His awareness of determining external forces thwarting the influence of truth and righteousness. He said nothing to lead men to expect any spectacular triumph for His cause; He said that to follow Him meant to be persecuted, but that if men were loyal to God's will, God Himself would establish His Kingdom.

Political thought has moved on parallel lines. We hear much of the failure of Liberalism. But the collapse of the pre-war Liberal creed was due to no mistake in its "ideals." Its ideals were right, and they are still valid. Its mistake was rather that it underestimated the irrational, instinctive, subterranean forces which thwart and destroy "rational" human progress. Liberals forgot the historical determinism of economic and material pressure; they forgot the moulding power of social inheritance; and they forgot the sheer fact of evil. Tennyson held the extraordinary notion that "we needs must love the highest when we see it." As often as not the sight of it turns us savage! So again it was too easily assumed that the fact that a man was a Frenchman or a German was irrelevant to his apprehension of a rational civilized ideal. We have been forced to learn how profoundly national and racial inheritance modifies our intellectual judgment, and how sternly ideals

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are conditioned by material and economic facts.

Thus the older Liberal philosophy is being swept off the field to-day by various brands of Marxian dialectic or the new creeds of political collectivism. All these are radically pessimistic, in the sense that they are all acutely sensitive to the extent to which life is determined by factors out of the range of man's volition. Thus they all discount the individual, as the mere function of a collective process, whether political or economic, which his own will is powerless to affect. At this point they move close to the orbit of an integral element in the mind of Christ. Yet just at this point we see the clear distinction between these two forms of "apocalyptic." Christianity, too, is pessimistic—as any profound theory of life must be—in the sense that it does not believe that fine ideals will win their own way, or that the world will go on putting itself to rights; it takes seriously the fact of evil, and knows how much it costs to redeem the world. It expects no facile victory for "ideals." Yet it is radically optimistic because—unlike the short-term this-world gospels—its hope is set in a redeeming God reconciling the world with His own will, and His final victory over the power of evil.

And here we must bear in mind this further fact which is one of the conditions of the Christian life. The traditional social ethic of Chris-

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tendom was originally worked out in terms of a far more simple and direct society, in which relations were still largely personal and forms of Government far more paternal than they can be in this age of power-production. Life to-day is inevitably and necessarily far more indirect and impersonal; and relationships have now to be worked out in terms of societies, groups and corporations. We may learn to love our neighbours as ourselves. But in what sense, as Sir Josiah Stamp asks, can it be expected that the N.U.R. will "love" the Railway Stockholders' Association? This impersonal character in our relationships leads us to blame everything on "the system." It seems as though sinister hidden forces in the present organization of society are always frustrating human betterment, and that only a new "system" can save us. It is easy, too, to persuade ourselves that while individuals may act unselfishly, yet as members of these social groups they are always actuated by selfish motives; and Reinhold Niebuhr writes a shattering book on *Moral Man and Immoral Society*.

All society, even the best, is sinful. Every human group is infected with sin. It is true, no doubt, that some forms of organization tend to strengthen, and others to mitigate, the self-regarding and predatory impulses. But a changed social economy, in itself, would not

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be less "selfish" than its predecessor. On the other hand, it is equally true that no system which functions at all can be altogether "immoral." It is easy to blame all our sense of helplessness on a "capitalistic" economic system. But *any* form of collectivist economy must present itself to the individual as equally "inhuman" and oppressive. I have no wish to argue in favour of Capitalism; but perhaps Christians underrate too easily the fundamentally good and moral qualities of fidelity, courage, loyalty and enterprise which it (or any other economic system) must take for granted before it can work at all. Even when it functions most evilly it depends for its existence on goodness. The real point is that we do not yet know how men and women can take any common action without defeating those very aims which as individuals they desire to realize.

Or again, people come to persuade themselves that there is some body of predatory interests—the Capitalist, the Banker or the Jew—deliberately preying on society; and at times whole populations hit out blindly at some group which they believe to be responsible. But there is no such easy liberation. What all this means is that the relationship between the individual and the group is still only imperfectly understood, and that we have hardly begun to understand how to "moralize" the relations

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between the various groups and corporations, whether social, political or economic. The Christian ethic, as Sir Josiah urges, has got to be thought out and thought through afresh in terms of this new limiting situation. That is the big task for Christian thinking during the next twenty-five years.

But to what conclusion has all this been leading? It is one more reminder that man's life is not that of an angel or a pure spirit any more than it is a merely natural product. Like the state and society itself it is at once natural and spiritual; and the Christian life has to be embodied within the order of nature and history, in the actual structure of social organization. This means something infinitely more "costly" than the life of a little Christian social group withdrawn from the world on a desert island. Progress may be measured, says Dr. Whitehead, by the extent to which in any society Christian ideals become increasingly possible; as things are they would mean sudden death.¹ But let us clearly grasp what this implies. To embody Christian principles in law—in collective security, for example—means that ideals have to be incarnated in procedure which, at least on the surface, *must* appear to be less than Christian, because it is bound to

¹ *Adventures of Ideas*, p. 18.

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work by different methods, by those of law not those of the Gospel. Thus inevitably all such efforts involve some strain for the Christian conscience, and must seem painfully slow and disappointing. But no more than his Master can the disciple shirk the conditions of incarnation. Something of this kind seems to be implicit in the mysterious saying in St. Luke: "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I *straitened* until it be accomplished!" (Luke xii. 50.)

All this may seem chilling to enthusiasm. But I venture to think that it must be frankly recognized if Christians are to think realistically and not spoil their case by claiming too much. We have had to learn that the mills of God grind more slowly than we had understood. It may be that we in this generation cannot hope for more than humble building "on any patch of ground that is open to us." In the last resort we are not responsible for the management of God's world.

But this does not mean that Christians can do nothing. The first thing that faith in God must mean is a sense of personal responsibility. It may be that pure, undiluted Christian principles cannot become directly and at once the law of the world in which we have to live, as it is in 1937. But half a loaf is better than no bread. If we cannot have a completely Christian policy, that does not excuse us for not

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trying to approximate to it as closely as is possible. What is required of us is to be "found faithful." • We must do the honest best that can be done. We cannot be Christians in a vacuum. We are Christian members of our Commonwealth, with all that this implies for individuals of social inheritance and legal system, and the particular character which this gives to our Christian vocation in the world. We cannot, even if we could, divest ourselves of this inheritance and responsibility. We live in the world of 1937. This is our post and we may not desert it. We cannot attempt to reverse the clock of history. We must work within the conditions as they are if we are to have any hope of changing them.

This clearly necessitates, amongst other things, a keen analysis of each situation, and the most stringent, searching calculation of the probable consequences of our action. We must do the honest best that can be done, trusting in God and surrendered to His will, and believing that it is His will to work not only through the Church and its ministries, but also through the broad sweep of history. For the world is God's, and through all He is sovereign.

The one thing we may not do is to drift. The Christian, says Brunner, is not a person who merely hopes for the Kingdom of God, but one who because he hopes for it also does some-

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thing in this world already which he who has not this hope does not do. To accept the conditions through which we must work is not to acquiesce in their permanence. The Christian conscience must ever keep alive the flame of passionate protest against them. It must be ever resolved to "break through." The initiative in all moral advance ought to be supplied by the Christian conscience; and "things are in a bad way with the faith of Christians when this initiative does not proceed from them."¹ In the matter of Peace and War, for example, there must be something wrong with discipleship if we are merely content to be imprisoned in the vicious circle described on a previous page (p. 169). Christians above all must try to break through it. It may be true, as things are to-day, that Christians have to sanction rearmament. But they certainly cannot "leave it at that." Their positive contribution is quite different. It is to remove the causes of armaments, pressing by every means in their power for political and economic appeasement—in a fresh, constructive approach (for instance) to the whole question of colonial territory—and insistently maintaining that God's will, embracing all mankind in His purpose, transcends all national and imperial "interests." Still more it must be their special function to resist the degeneration of war-

¹ Brunner, *op. cit.*, pp. 128, 233.

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mindfulness, and release the creative force of faith and prayer into that international confusion before which human statesmanship seems helpless. Even now, a world-wide league of Christian prayer would establish the whole problem on a new basis. So again in social and economic issues, that of unemployment, for example. It is for Christians to show what can be done by faith, sympathy and imagination where official remedies fail to meet the need, not of unemployment as a social fact, but of unemployed men and women. It is in this sphere of personal relationships that the Christian ethic has its grand chance, even inside any existing system, and it is here (as Christian history shows), that those decisive movements are initiated by which the systems are revolutionized.

This "prophetic" mission of the Church is vital, and it is exercised most effectively in courageous Christian experiments. The foolishness of God is wiser than men. Yet it is this world which has to be redeemed, and it is surely the mark of moral seriousness not merely to demand what is perfect, but to "get done" what is actually better. Thus Christians must be eager to co-operate with all men and women of goodwill, though they may not themselves be disciples, and even though they work, as work they must in the world to-day, by less than Christian methods, towards producing that

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kind of society which would least undeserve Christ's approval. This must obviously involve some "compromise." But the alternative is to hold aloof and fail to make *any* Christian contribution. We have no right to allow talk of "absolutes" to become—as it may—an excuse for evading any actual moral obligation.

Meanwhile, to acknowledge an absolute standard will preserve the right tension in our "compromises" when we have to decide on a concrete course of action. The impracticability of the Christian ethic is what saves us from the fatal acquiescence in an ideal of the second-best. "He that is not with me is against me: he that is not against us is on our part." These two sayings, held in a single unity, may be taken as setting forth the Christian standard, both in its all-demanding requirement and in the wide tolerance of its sympathy.

III

"He that is not with me is against me." The Christian must live by an absolute allegiance, acknowledging the Lordship of the Lord Jesus as Sovereign over the whole range of living, submitting every plan and every motive to that relentless and all-searching scrutiny. And the grand vocation of the Church to-day—the grandest and the hardest ever set before it—

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is to manifest to the world a society which does acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord, in its relationships amongst its own members, in the administration of its resources, in its hunger and thirst for peace and righteousness, and its outgoing impact on the world, in its concern for the underprivileged and its eager service of all human need. It must live by more exacting standards than those of average "decent" society, approaching all practical decisions whether in public or private affairs from the standpoint of the mind of Christ, not that of a class, a party or a nation. There are enough Christians in the world *now*, if we could but stand by our convictions, to banish war from the earth for ever.

The disappointment of good men to-day with the Church of Christ turns on the ambiguity of its moral witness and its seeming failure to embody its professed standards in its own life. When men see the Christian Church in being, they will believe in the Gospel it proclaims. Many to-day feel that the Church, though it has indeed the power to save the world, does not itself seem to be aware of this, or to be vibrant with the sense of its own mission. The "short-cut" gospels of the Revolutions are utterly and fanatically certain that they have the truth for which the world is waiting, and are ready to pay the price for this conviction

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Can less be demanded from the Church of Christ? No half-committed, unexact loyalty is likely to turn the world upside-down. If we would gather the young into our membership and enlist their sincerity and ardour in this most magnificent of all crusades, then a great demand must be made upon them. We must display no less will to sacrifice, no less tenacity, discipline and courage, no less readiness to suffer loss for our loyalty to Christ the King.

Such a call has come to Christ's Church to-day, and through it to all men and women of goodwill. We have hardly yet begun to explore the meaning of a common life ruled by the law of Christ. Everywhere frustrated and despairing men are seeking to free themselves from their chains, reaching out after new life. Temporarily they have lost their way and are serving strange gods and false values. Here is the true goal of human living, the true fulfilment of human possibility. Here is the way of life that is real. It still waits to be honestly attempted. We have yet to show mankind what is meant by a common life built on the foundation of the Christian belief in God and man; we have yet to find out what is implied in it. The call now sounds to all those men and women who feel the world's need in their hearts and consciences and believe, if inarticulately and falteringly, that in Christ's way there is yet

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the one hope for it, to dedicate themselves to this adventure. This is the one thing utterly worth doing. If the Christian Church comes alive again, consecrated to its own standard, living by the Lordship of Jesus, no power on earth would be able to withstand it. We can neither measure nor exaggerate what would be the influence in the world of a living fellowship of thought and life which approached all question of public policy with a mind illuminated by His spirit and a conscience obedient to His revelation.

This is the way to Christianize politics. For salvation comes to any human society through the more demanding standards of minorities keeping alive a perpetual protest against the deification of the average. Christians are to be in the world as salt, which saves civilization from corruption. They have their own loyalties and standards, and on pain, not only of Christian disloyalty but of failure in their social contribution, they cannot allow any declension from them. But it is within their own group and nation that the Christian allegiance has to be expressed. And thus, with their eyes always on the "standard," they must be trying to find out the "rules" which will best tend to promote Christian conduct in regard to any particular moral issue, and within the given, existing situation. If the standard is eternal, the rules

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change; and it does not follow that the actual conduct which has been required of Christians in the past is the best and therefore the most "Christian" way to serve the Kingdom to-day and to-morrow. We do not live by a fixed code of conduct, we acknowledge the Sovereignty of Christ the King.

Once more let us think realistically. It is not true that if all men were Christians our social problems would vanish in a night; and such glib phrases injure the Christian cause. The technical problems would still remain, needing skill, mastery and knowledge as well as piety for their solution. Yet if this world does turn to Christ, and more men and women do become Christians, how immeasurable will be the difference! The world to-day is starving and perishing for lack of inward spiritual resources, imprisoned within its own self-centred system, knowing no inner springs of power, illumination, healing and renewal. What new strength would man bring to his task, what new range of moral possibility, what new power of sacrificial service, what compunction, trust and forgiveness if the living Christ were enthroned in the heart and mind of our societies! There are no words in which we can express what transformed spiritual quality would thus be released into the life of man and embodied forth in his institutions. And the Church exists primarily

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and always to be a fellowship of the Holy Spirit—of men and women redeemed by Christ, enabled and guided by the grace of God—called into being by God's act through Him. It is the society of the Eternal Kingdom, keeping open the channels of the spirit to the "powers of the world to come" for the redemption of man's life in time. And this is, ultimately, its only weapon—to be trying to make more men and women Christians, and to nurture them in Christ's faith and love.

To say this brings the Christian life back to its true perennial source of power and guidance. It is the life that is ever turned God-wards and lived in the companionship of Christ. We are anxious and troubled about many things, so beset with the problems of Christian conduct as to be forgetful of the one thing needful. The very complexity of the world to-day and the urgency of the demand it makes upon us should recall us and the whole Church universal to the elemental Christian simplicities of faith and prayer and reliance upon God, and trust in the power of the living Christ. All things are possible to him that believeth; in the secret places of prayer and communion we breathe in a climate of new possibility—of men transfigured and a world redeemed, of faith and hope and charity that "abide," of a Power and Presence with us all the days, ever able to "make all

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things new." We move from man's despair to God's promise, from man's bankruptcy to God's initiative, from earth's failure to the divine victory. His is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory for ever and ever.

Perhaps this means that the first need of the Churches, if they would Christianize the world for God, is to help revive in their rank and file membership the capacity for vital prayer and worship. It is no good urging people to say their prayers. Most men to-day, including a great many Christians, have long ceased to be able to do that. Nearly all the influences that play upon us conspire to starve and thwart the inward life, and traditional methods of prayer and meditation have (rightly or wrongly) ceased to serve their purpose. What we need most now is a new technique for keeping open the windows of the spirit to life-giving communion with the Father and the companionship of Christ Jesus, so that men and women living in the world and giving themselves to its rightful tasks and claims, may keep their lives "hid with Christ in God." Thus amid the problems and limitations of the earthly city they may rule their lives by the citizenship which is in heaven; and living in the world may be partakers of the victory which overcomes the world.

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